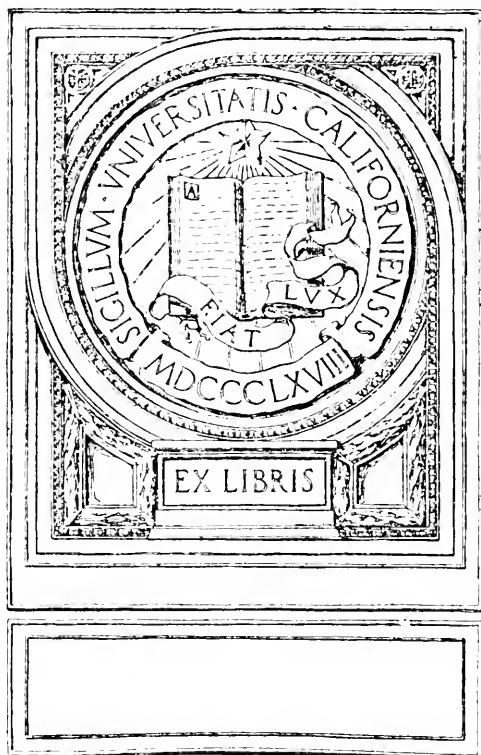


EXCHANGE





COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY STUDIES IN ENGLISH

ENGLISH TRAGICOMEDY

· ENGLISH TRAGICOMEDY ·

ITS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

BY

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A. H. THORNDIKE,
Secretary.

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PREFACE

This work is an attempt to present a comprehensive survey of a relatively unexplored field in English drama. In spite of the study and research lavished upon other phases of dramatic literature, the subject of tragicomedy has been consistently neglected in literary history and has almost escaped the attention of the critical investigator as well. The only special monograph in the field, Dr. H. C. Lancaster's study of "The French Tragi-Comedy: Its Origin and Development from 1552 to 1628", deals, as the title proclaims, with a foreign aspect of the subject; and so far as England is concerned, the only important critical matter bearing directly on tragicomic drama is embodied in the researches of Professor A. H. Thorndike in the Beaumont-Fletcher plays and in a chapter of Professor F. E. Schelling's work on "Elizabethan Drama." The present study has presumed to cover somewhat discursively the entire field of the subject in England and to determine, if possible, its position and importance in the drama of which it is a part.

Naturally such an undertaking has been made possible only by taking advantage of the work of predecessors at every step. Apart from particular cases of indebtedness indicated throughout the discussion and the aid received from the works listed in the appended Bibliography, certain obligations call for special acknowledgment, particularly those incurred from the above mentioned studies. Wherein the plan and scope of the present work has necessitated retracing some of the ground already covered by Dr. Lancaster's dissertation, adequate acknowledgment, I trust, has been made, though I am conscious of other obligations to that able thesis which can not always be readily traced. Professor Schelling's monumental history of the Elizabethan drama has been of constant assistance, as it must be to all who work in that field. But my most personal obligations are to Professor Ashley H. Thorndike. To at-

tempt to add to his discussion of the early tragicomic drama of Beaumont and Fletcher would be a work of supererogation; while the indebtedness of my essay to his book on "Tragedy", particularly in respect to general plan and to organization of material, will be readily apparent to anyone familiar with that volume. And if my debt to Professor Thorndike's printed work has been much, my debt to his personal assistance has been more; for to him this study owes its inception, and under his personal direction it has been prosecuted to completion.

My thanks are due also to the other members of the departments of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia under whom I have studied, especially to Professor Brander Matthews, Professor William W. Lawrence, and Professor Jefferson B. Fletcher, who have kindly read the manuscript and given me the benefit of their helpful suggestions; and to my friend and fellow student, Dr. Ernest Hunter Wright, who has contributed certain bibliographical matters inaccessible to me in the British Museum.

F. H. R.

WABASH COLLEGE, May, 1910.

ENGLISH TRAGICOMEDY

ITS ORIGIN AND HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

The difficulties and problems confronting one who would trace the evolution of that phase of the English drama known as tragicomedy are as persistent as they are perplexing. Perhaps the main crux hinges on the very lack of distinctiveness that is and always has been attached to that word of dramatic nomenclature. Just what tragicomedy is, and what plays should be considered in a history of that species are questions that will occur at once to any student of the English drama. To the lay mind, the word is perhaps only thought of secondarily in relation to dramatic composition; for plays described as tragicomedies have long since ceased to be a part of the living drama.¹ Present-day popular usage doubtless employs the term oftener in some figurative capacity than in respect to stage plays. Yet tragicomedy as the name of a once consequential and recognized dramatic species is a fact known to every one familiar with the history of modern drama; and while the initial difficulties attending an approach to the subject in hand may not be totally effaced by an introductory discussion, they may be limited and in some degree minimized.

A bare statement of the part played by so-called tragicomedy in the history of dramatic literature in general and in that of England in particular is convincing proof of its importance as a literary *genre* and of its claim to independent study. The bald facts are: that sporadic productions denominated tragicomedies

¹ Henry Arthur Jones, indeed, described his *Galilean's Victory* (later called the *Evangelist*), 1907, as a *Tragi-Comedy of Religious Life in England*; but instances of the sort are certainly rare in modern drama.

began to appear almost simultaneously in the sixteenth century vernacular dramas of Italy, Spain, France and England, following the contact of the medieval stage with humanistic innovation; that these productions steadily increased in number and popularity with the growth of the *drame libre*, assuming in course of time more or less definite characteristics, enlisting critical defenders and opponents, and forming no inconsiderable part of the seventeenth century national drama of each country; and finally, that after a period of varied ascendancy the vogue of the tragicomedy declined, until by the eighteenth century plays so entitled practically disappeared from the popular stage. The English phase of this transient dramatic evolution assumes a special interest on a realization of its importance as a factor in the great Elizabethan drama.

Developing out of the pre-Shaksperian stage, English tragicomedy first sprang into full-blown existence in the early seventeenth century; thence it speedily grew in popular favor, enlisting the best efforts of the last of the great Elizabethans, and maintaining preëminence over all other forms of drama until the civil wars closed the theaters. With the Restoration its popularity began to abate; changes in social and theatrical conditions accomplished its steady decay; and by the dawn of the Augustan era the type in England was a relic of the past.

By tragicomedy, then, we are to understand, first of all, an extinct dramatic species, and one whose origin and development, while paralleled in several countries alike, we propose to trace in English drama alone, with only incidental notice of its related foreign aspects. Under these limitations, we are, therefore, not concerned with parceling out the whole of English drama according to some empiric standard of what may or ought to constitute this or that dramatic kind. English tragicomedy, properly so-called, enjoyed but a transient existence; and consequently it is futile to look beyond certain definite bounds for plays of the species.

With the scope of the subject thus roughly indicated, let us consider for a moment the nature of tragicomedy in the abstract. While baffling final definition, the word as it stands may be taken to convey an idea of something that is neither

tragedy nor comedy—in the popular acceptance of those terms—and yet in some sense both; an idea that need not seem so paradoxical when we consider the variable character of all drama, or, indeed, the natural course of human events, of which the drama is but the reflection. It is not difficult in actual life to conceive of a happening or a series of happenings that fulfils the requirements of the above elemental definition. What we consider as tragical and comical have a way of shading into one another by imperceptible advances, until the juncture is lost; or what may appeal as tragic to one will be comic to another. Many a serious event has its humorous side; that the pathetic is akin to the comical and laughter neighbor to tears are truisms of long-standing acceptance;² while the comparison of life to a tragicomedy is almost as old as the word itself.³

What is true of actual experience is equally true of drama. While tragedy and comedy, the recognized main divisions of dramatic composition, are theoretically of antipodal emotional effect, the one is constantly blending with the other, and he would be a bold man who would presume to distinguish them absolutely. Fontenelle attempted to put the situation concretely by distributing the emotions aroused by drama in a sort of prismatic scale, as the terrible, the sublime, the pathetic, the tender, the amusing, the absurd; allotting the first two divisions

² Cp. Shelley,

Our sincerest laughter

With some pain is fraught;

Our sweetest songs are those that tell of
saddest thought.

³ The following passage occurs in the writings of the third century Neoplatonist, Porphyry:

“For none of these causes did I choose another to be partner of my life, but there was a twofold and reasonable cause that swayed me. One part was that I deemed I should thus propitiate the gods of generation; just as Sokrates in his prison chose to compose popular music, for the sake of safety in his departure from life, instead of his customary labors in philosophy, so did I strive to propitiate the divinities who preside over this tragi-comedy (*κωμικοτραγωδία*) of ours.” *Porphyry the Philosopher to His Wife Marcella*. Translated with Introduction by Alice Zimmern, London (1896), p. 54. See below, p. 8, note 29.

of the spectrum to tragedy, the last two to comedy, and assigning the intermediate to a neutral sphere, properly neither the one nor the other but mingled of both, to which one might give a special name.⁴ As a matter of fact, from time immemorial there have been plays to which the terms tragedy and comedy in their traditional significance have been wholly inapplicable. The entire body of Sanscrit drama with its prohibited tragic conclusion is a notable case in point.⁵ Euripides' "Alcestis," Shakspeare's "Measure for Measure," Beaumont and Fletcher's "Philaster," Corneille's "Cid," Ibsen's "Doll's House," a popular melodrama, or a modern problem play, are all examples of the same thing. Certainly what we may term intermediate drama, or drama lying on the shadowy border-line of tragedy and comedy, has formed no small part of the popular drama from the very earliest times to the present; and within this broad and indeterminate division we may safely fix the realm of tragicomedy.

Thus far our conception of tragicomedy involves, broadly a type of intermediate drama which developed, flourished and — waned upward of two centuries ago. To frame a more particular and at the same time generally inclusive definition is well-nigh impossible, considering the many variations the type has permitted, and the diverse critical opinions it has called forth. Indeed, the far ramifications of the form have extended the name of tragicomedy to almost every variety of drama,— miracle play, morality, school drama, pastoral, academic exercise, domestic tragedy, heroic play, political squib, farce— variant forms to be expected of any dramatic type; whereas the diversity of critical opinion regarding the practise is more or less peculiar to it alone. Whether due to the fact that tragicomedy has always labored under a critical opprobrium that would stamp it as a bastard form beneath serious consideration, or to the fact that the chief cultivators of the species have rarely fortified their practise with a critical theory, there

⁴ *Préface Générale de la Tragédie & des six Comédies de ce Recueil* (*Œuvres*, 1764, VII, 8).

⁵ Cp. M. Schuyler, Jr., *A Bibliography of the Sanscrit Drama* (New York, 1906), p. 2.

has been relatively little criticism of any sort on the subject of tragicomedy and less unanimity of opinion as to what constituted the same.

As the peculiar attributes of the type, there have been advanced: the serious nature of the plot, the absence of deaths, the freedom from rule, the noble rank of the characters, the romantic nature of the subject, the happy dénouement, and perhaps most frequently, the mixture of tragic and comic parts.⁶ This last particular—the mixture of tragic and comic parts, or rather the introduction of comedy into tragedy—English criticism especially, whenever it deigned to notice tragicomedy at all, immediately seized upon and stubbornly retained as the constituent principle of the species, in direct defiance of actual stage tradition;—a perversity of criticism typifying the essential lack of coördination between English dramatic theory and practise which was characteristic of the time. Perhaps the Italian Guarini, the only real exponent of a carefully formulated theory of tragicomedy, in his voluminous writings defending his famous “Pastor Fido” most nearly approximated the true essence of the perfected type. The gist of his argument is that tragicomedy, far from being a discordant mixture of tragedy and comedy, is a thoro blend of such parts of each as can stand together with verisimilitude with the result that the deaths of tragedy are reduced to the danger of deaths, and the whole in every respect a graduated mean between the austerity and dignity of the one and the pleasantness and ease of the other—a theory shortly echoed in England, Spain and France, and doubtless instrumental in establishing the species.

Altho anticipating later discussion, we may examine here briefly the stability of some of the criteria frequently advanced for tragicomedy. The mere mixing of tragic and comic elements as the chief essential of the type may be summarily re-

⁶For an account of the most important French and German critical opinions on tragicomedy, see H. C. Lancauer, *The French Tragi-Comedy* (1907), p. xi ff. In the ensuing study all contemporary definitions bearing directly on English tragicomedy are, of course, given in chronological order.

- 1 - jected, as an idea of no foundation in actual practise, despite its prevalence in both critical opinion and popular notion; altho we shall find that interspersed comedy is a common tho not a peculiar characteristic of fully developed tragicomedy.
- 2 Again, as our subject is essentially a product of the *drame libre*, its innate independence of the so-called dramatic rules and precepts goes without saying, altho, it may be noted, plays of the name have been written which are as regular as the most austere classical drama. Romantic subject and leading personages of high rank are equally familiar but not inevitable attributes; while the emotional effect intended by the action may range from that of the most harrowing tragedy to a point where its separation from the purely comic becomes a matter of individual opinion. Then again, the absence of deaths as a final test for the form breaks down decisively; for many are the professed tragicomedies which admit death in some shape or other. Seldom, however, is a fatal conclusion meted out to those with whom our sympathies are allied—a fact of no mean significance, correlating as it does the most pronounced and distinctive feature of the type, the happy dénouement. ←
- 3 True, the successful outcome of an unhappy or tumultuous action will not necessarily distinguish tragicomedy from tragedy. Yet, whereas from the time of Aristotle the happy ending has been accepted as a permissible rather than as a natural accompaniment of tragedy, of tragicomedy it is the well-nigh indispensable adjunct. In fact, but a tiny fraction of all avowed plays of the latter kind would fail to meet the test of the happy *dénouement*. The importance of this last element to the subject will be the more apparent in the subsequent pages.

As supplementary to these somewhat general characteristics of tragicomedy as a dramatic type, a more exact conception of the nature of the perfected species is ascertainable by disregarding its undefinable variations and other perplexing features and centering attention on what we may arbitrarily determine to be typical tragicomedy, and that as illustrated in English drama. While our subject has always been a variable quantity changing in accord with altering conditions and in-

fluences, yet almost any group of tragicomedies selected at random from Elizabethan and Restoration drama—such as Beaumont and Fletcher's "Philaster," Massinger's "Bashful Lover," Shirley's "Young Admiral," Carlell's "Deserving Favorite," Davenant's "Love and Honor," Dryden's "Spanish Friar"—constitute a more or less typical body and furnish certain definite characteristics, which define the peculiarities of the form and distinguish it from other kinds of intermediate drama.

Perhaps the first impression gained from reading any such group of plays is one of startling unreality. The reader is transported to a no man's land, beyond the ken of human experience, where men take on superhuman characteristics, where strange events happen, and imaginary history is made and unmade in the twinkling of an eye. The checkered fortunes of monarchs, generals, and lords and ladies of high degree engross his chief attention; war, usurpation, rebellion—actual or imminent—furnish a subordinate interest; while a comic touch or sub-plot is the diverting accompaniment of the romantic action. Love of some sort is the motive force; intrigue is rife; the darkest villainy is contrasted with the noblest and most exalted virtue. In the course of an action teeming with incident and excitement, and in which the characters are enmeshed in a web of disastrous complications, reverse and surprise succeed each other with a lightning rapidity, and the outcome trembles in the balance. But final disaster is ingeniously averted. The necessary *dei ex machina* descend in the nick of time: wrongs are righted, wounds healed, reconciliation sets in, penitent villainy is forgiven, and the happy ending made complete.

After reading a few such plays, one ceases to wonder that tragicomedy is a relatively unknown dramatic evolution and has generally received scant attention from the literary historian. The fact is that the very nature of the species precluded any possibility of its permanence as drama. It is even doubtful if the form, in England at least, can be said to have left a literary monument. "Cymbeline" and the "Winter's Tale" both fall short of the full-blown type; for Shakspeare's

career had closed before the new dramatic fashion became ascendent. And the "Philaster" of Beaumont and Fletcher, which by its historical position and long continued stage popularity is entitled to the first place among English tragicomedies, is little known to the general reader. Indeed, a large proportion of plays of the name must be sought in first editions. The essential lack of the integrating qualities that make for lasting drama is the besetting fault of tragicomedy. It presents no transcript from life; it neglects portrayal of character and psychological analysis for plot and theatricality; it substitutes dramatic falsity for dramatic truth; it emphasizes novelty, sensation, surprise, startling effect. All is unreal, artificial, inadequate. But it appealed to the taste for which it was written. Among an uncritical audience devoted to romantic extravagance it arose to the pinnacle of popular favor. With the coming of the age of prose and reason, fashions began to change: the vogue wore out; and English tragicomedy, deserted by poetry and at odds with taste, became an absurdity of the past—like the Arcadian pastoral, while many of its essentials were adopted into sentimental comedy, musical plays, melodrama and other forms of intermediate drama that sprang up in the eighteenth century.

To gain some preliminary idea of the peculiar nature of tragicomedy, we have been considering it in its fully developed form. The ensuing study is rather an attempt to give an historical sketch of the subject: to trace its course from the beginnings thru its various stages of development, culmination and decay; to note its varying aspects, influences, and the part it has played in the history of the drama and of criticism; and to show it as a continuous growth, controlled by the same natural laws which preside over any evolutionary development. With this plan in mind, it has seemed necessary to begin with the very sources of modern drama for the origins of tragicomedy; and also to consider the early vernacular developments of the subject on the continent as well as in England. The early Elizabethan drama, being the formative period of the English species, has been examined in some detail, and plays of indirect as well as direct bearing on the

subject noticed. Beginning with Beaumont and Fletcher, however, the field becomes more restricted, and only such plays have been considered which either offer some documentary evidence of their contemporary recognition as tragicomedies or manifestly fulfil the conditions of the type. In locating and collating this material, recourse has been had to a number and variety of sources, including many seventeenth and eighteenth century catalogs of plays—most of which are utterly unreliable—and the more authoritative lists of modern scholarship.⁷ The list of plays forming the appendix is an attempt to give the sum of English tragicomedies.

⁷As most helpful for this purpose may be mentioned Langbaine's *Dramatick Poets*, the *Biographia Dramatica*, Genest's *English Stage*, the catalogs of the British Museum and of the Malone Collection in the Bodleian, and the play lists furnished by Halliwell, Fleay, W. W. Greg and Schelling; for which see *Bibliography*.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF TRAGICOMEDY

Modern tragicomedy, while first realized in the Renaissance, owes its inception to generating influences that extend back to the very beginnings of drama. In fact, the crude essence of the form is absent from no period or kind of dramatic composition. Far from being an unprecedented invention of modern times, it has both ancient and medieval prototypes; and its lines of descent are the same as those of its stronger and more regarded sisters, tragedy and comedy. To the classical stage of Greece and Rome it is indebted for a name and authoritative precedent; from the religious drama of the Middle Ages it inherits its traditions and dominant characteristics; and to the humanist imitators of classical models it owes its ultimate realization as a distinct form of drama. To examine the extent and character of this three-fold heritage will be the purpose of the present chapter.

(1) *The Relation of the Classical Drama to Tragicomedy*

The relation of the classical drama to the later development and history of tragicomedy is perhaps more vital than is commonly thought. That the classical period of the drama, with its rigid distinctions between tragedy and comedy, is the one furthest removed from any connexion with an intermediate species, would be the natural deduction; yet, in two ways at least, there is a definite and important relation between tragicomedy and the ancient drama. First, the mingling of the motives of tragedy and comedy in one dramatic piece found its first expression in the earliest period of the drama; secondly, and related thereto, the question whether or not tragicomedy could justify its existence by proving its classical parentage, was one of the most mooted points of discussion waged over

the practise during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. To understand, then, an important influence in the history of our subject, some consideration of its connexion with the parent drama is necessary.

The classical period of the drama is regarded as a time of exact distinctions between the provinces of the dramatic forms, a time of pure tragedy on the one hand, and pure comedy on the other; each carefully distinguished from the other by accepted theoretical definitions. Yet a superficial acquaintance with ancient drama is enough to show that tragedy and comedy were never so far apart in actual practise as classical tradition would have them. Between the extremes of pure tragedy and pure comedy of the Aristotelian formulas there was always a "Tertium Quid," a something that manifestly overstepped the bounds of the one or of the other. The two forms were continually overlapping, blending one into the other, and creating an intermediate type so obviously neither tragedy nor comedy that classical critics were at a loss to name it.¹ The romanticists, or apologists for the free drama, on the other hand, seized upon every possible violation of the strict letter of decorum that the ancient drama could furnish, and turned it to account in defense of the mingling of tragic and comic.

In fact, it is surprising how many excuses the classical drama afforded those who sought to reconcile tragicomedy with the supposed teachings and practise of the ancients. In the Guarini controversy, the whole question of the legitimacy of the species was approached from the standpoint of ancient precedent; and the same is true in almost all contemporary criticism that championed or opposed the form. A review of the chief arguments advanced by the defenders of tragicomedy to show that the mixed type of drama was a legitimate production sanctioned by the theory and practise of the ancients, may best show the bearing of the classical drama on the subject.

¹ Minturno, *De Poeta* (1559), p. 108, lists three kinds of imitation, the *Tragica*, the *Comica*, and a *Tertia*, which, he adds, is *tanquam his interiecta*.

No subtleties of casuistry were left untried by the critical advocates of the free drama in their efforts to justify tragicomedy by ancient dramatic theory. Even the fact that the "Poetics" of Aristotle nowhere mentioned tragicomedy was no serious barrier to the defenders of the type. On the other hand, one passage of the "Poetics" was eagerly advanced in support of the claim that, if Aristotle did not speak of tragicomedy by name, he yet described and gave a place to a dramatic form so similar to it as to be practically the same.² The passage in question is the one setting forth the second kind of tragedy:

"In the second rank comes the kind of tragedy which some place first. Like the *Odyssey*, it has a double thread of plot, and also an opposite catastrophe for the good and for the bad. It is accounted the best because of the weakness of the spectators; for the poet is guided in what he writes by the wishes of his audience. The pleasure, however, thence derived is not the true tragic pleasure. It is proper rather to Comedy, where those who, in the piece, are the deadliest enemies—like *Orestes* and *Ægisthus*—quit the stage as friends at the close, and no one slays or is slain."³

This recognition by the highest critical authority of the possibility of a tragedy of double plot and happy ending was made much of, not only by Guarini and his coterie, but also by other critics who interpreted it as a veritable admission of the legitimacy of tragicomedy itself.⁴ It is to be noticed in this passage that Aristotle, while expressly stating his disapprobation of this kind of tragedy, observes that it usually passes for the best, and excuses its popularity on the grounds of the weakness of the spectators for a play of happy ending, happy at least for the virtuous. Popular taste in the drama apparently has remained the same since the time of Aristotle. It became a commonplace in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to apologize for tragicomedy, or indeed any mixture of gravity and mirth, on the grounds that it pleased the play-going public;⁵ and,

² A main argument of Guarini, see below, p. 39.

³ *Poetics*, XIII. Translation of S. H. Butcher, 1898.

⁴ Cp. A. Donatus, *De Arte Poetica* (1630), Cap. LVIII, *De Tragicomædia*. See also below, p. 31.

⁵ Cp. Giraldi, Lope de Vega, Ricardo del Turia, below, pp. 29, 49, 51.

indeed, if we examine the drama of today, we notice that the happy ending is usually still a first requisite for a popular play.

While the Aristotelian recognition of a tragedy of happy ending was advanced in support of tragicomedy, the practise of the dramatists themselves in that regard was emphasized even more. The ancient drama afforded a number of tragedies whose endings were "proper rather to Comedy"; and, on the other hand, classical comedy could at times be condemned for a corresponding overstepping of decorum. Even classical critics admitted that tragedy and comedy were not always pure. Scaliger, after stating that a genuine tragedy is altogether serious, adds that there are not a few tragedies which end happily, and many comedies which end unhappily for some of the characters.⁶ Vossius observes that tragedy and comedy were often of a mixed kind; "comœdia, si vehementiores recipiat affectus; tragœdia, si leniores."⁷ Lope de Vega, a classicist in theory at least, reproaches Plautus for raising the style of comedy to a tragic loftiness, which Terence never does.⁸ Nicholas Grimald, the English humanist, defends the tragicomic character of his "Christus Redivivus" by citing the precedent of Plautus' "Captivi."⁹ And d'Aubignac would correct the misapprehension that tragedy always ends unhappily, and comedy happily, offering examples from the classics in support of the point.¹⁰

Among Greek tragedies of mixed character the "Ion," "Orestes," "Iphigenia," "Helen," "Electra," "Alcestis" of Euripides, the "Eumenides" and "Suppliants" of Æschylus, and others, were repeatedly cited as proof that the ancients themselves did not always conform to the strict canons laid

⁶ *Poetices* (1561), III, 97.

⁷ *Poeticarum Institutionum* (1647), I, xx, 7. Elsewhere Vossius states that there are two kinds of tragedy: "the pure, where there is nothing that is not tragic; and the mixed, where Satyrs are added, or which is given a happy ending." *Ibid.*, II, xvii, 2.

⁸ *Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias* (1609). Cp. Ben Jonson, *Every Man out of his Humor* (1599), III, 2.

⁹ See below, p. 24.

¹⁰ *La Pratique du Théâtre* (1657). English translation, *The Whole Art of the Stage* (1684), IV, 5, 140.

down for pure tragedy.¹¹ And the fact that the characters appropriate to tragedy and comedy were frequently mingled by the ancients was likewise quoted by the defenders of the mixed drama. Guarini reminds his opponents that Sophocles introduces the lowly persons of comedy in the "Ædipus," and that in Aristophanes there are mingled characters, gods, citizens, rogues, etc.¹² Lope de Vega defends the mingling of high and low persons by the example of Plautus;¹³ and Scaliger, in the same connexion, remarks that "novelty pleases us in things dramatic, even when a play is distorted to secure it."¹⁴

But besides tragedies and comedies that in one way or another overstepped the bounds of strict decorum, the ancient drama afforded yet another precedent for the mingling of tragic and comic. The Greek satyric drama of the tragic poets, judged from the sole extant specimen of that type of play, the "Cyclops" of Euripides, was obviously a composition that united the motives of both forms. The humanists and Renaissance critics frequently described the satyric drama as belonging to a mixed species, part tragedy and part comedy. Perhaps the definition given by the sixteenth century humanist, Casaubon, may be taken as typical of the Renaissance view of the type. According to him, the ancient satyric play is a "dramatic poem, joined on to tragedy, having a chorus of satyrs, setting forth a notable action, partly serious and partly comic, of illustrious persons, in a merry style, and with an ending full of joy."¹⁵ Scaliger, commenting on the type as a by-product of tragedy, says, "there have been some satyirical

¹¹ Cp. Giraldi, Barreda, Vauquelin, below, pp. 29, 51, 55; also Hugo Grotius, *Sophompancas* (1635), Epistle Dedicatory.

¹² *Il Verrato*, 1588 (*Opere*, II, 237). -Cp. also Ricardo del Turia, below, p. 51.

¹³ *Arte Nuevo*, "In this we draw near to the ancient comedy, in which Plautus did not fear to place even gods, as the part he gives Jupiter in the *Amphitryon* proves."

¹⁴ *Poetices*, I, 7.

¹⁵ *De satyrica Græcorum pœsi et Romanorum satyra* (1605), I, 3. Vossius, commenting on this definition, adds that the chorus of satyrs distinguishes the type from *tragicomœdia* and the *Phlyacographia* of Rhinthon. *Poet. Instit.*, II, xix, 4.

plays which differed little from comedies save in the gravity of some of the characters. We have an illustration in the *Cyclops* of Euripides, where all is wine and jesting, and where the outcome is so happy that all the companions of Ulysses are released, and the Cyclops alone suffers in the loss of his eye."¹⁶ Guarini boldly claims the ancient Satyr-plays to be tragicomedies, and quotes the passage on the satyric drama in the "*Ars Poetica*"¹⁷ of Horace as perfectly expressing the "nature and art of tragicomedy."¹⁸ The same arguments are advanced by Giovanni Savio, who declares that tragicomedy is an ancient poem, as the satyric drama is proved to be tragicomic; and that the "*Cyclops*" of Euripides, under the name of tragedy, is nothing more than a tragicomedy.¹⁹ The sixteenth century French grammarian and translator, Florent Chrestien, in his "*Versio et Notæ in Euripides Cyclopem*," also terms the "*Cyclops*" a tragicomedy.²⁰ In fact, one of the most important defenses of tragicomedy in vernacular criticism, that of François Ogier, is based on the satyric example of the ancient drama; to Ogier the satyirical play seems only "a tragicomedy full of jesting and wine."²¹

Apparently, then, tragicomedy could be justified by both the theory and practise of the ancient Greek drama; an added argument in favor of its classical parentage was the fact that it owed its name as well as its earliest expression to classical precedent. The invention of the word tragicomedy is usually ascribed to Plautus, who is credited with having coined the term in the well-known prolog to the "*Amphitruo*":

"What? do you frown because I said that this would be a tragedy? I am a god, and I will change it. From a tragedy, if you like, I will make

¹⁶ *Poetics*, III, 97.

¹⁷ "He who contended in tragic poetry for the paltry prize of a goat, soon afterwards disclosed wild Satyrs; and, uncouth, attempted jest, without sacrificing the dignity of his subject; because in this way, the spectator, having performed the rites of Bacchus, and drunken and lawless, had to be detained by allurements and agreeable novelty." (II, 220-4).

¹⁸ See below, p. 36.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

²⁰ Cp. Creizenach, *Geschichte*, II, 104.

²¹ See below, p. 58.

this a comedy, with all the lines the same. Do you wish this or not? But I am too silly, as if I, who am a god, did not know that you wished it. I know what your mind is upon this thing: I will make it be mixed; let it be a tragicomedy (*tragicomædia*²²). For I do not think it fair to make this entirely a comedy, where kings and gods appear. What then? Since this servant also has a part, just as I have said, I will make it be a tragicomedy."²³

It is to be noticed that there is no hint in this passage of the ideas that later came to be associated with the word tragicomedy. Apparently Plautus uses the word jestingly, finding it a happy expression to cover up his violation of decorum in introducing the divine characters of tragedy in a comedy.²⁴ The term was obviously ill-applied; and tragicomedy retained the meaning that Plautus invented for it only among the humanist lexicographers and the classical critics. Such an interpretation of the word is preserved in the definition of comedy given by Ambrogio Calepino: "If the persons of gods or rulers happen to be mingled in comedy, they are not properly called comedies, but tragicomedies."²⁵ And d'Aubignac insists that the only real tragicomedy is that invented by Plautus, so

²² The word appears thus in the MS., but it is to be noted from the emended Latin text below that this form of the word may be the result of an error of dittography on the part of the scribe, in which case the more logical *tragicomædia* represents the proper form of the term as used by Plautus.

²³ quid? contraxistis frontem quia tragœdiam
dixi futuram hanc? deu'sum, commutauero.
eandem hanc, si uoltis, faciam(iam) ex tragœdia
comœdia ut sit omnibus isdem uorsibus.
utrum sit an non uoltis? sed ego stultior,
quasi nesciam uos uelle, qui diuos siem.
teneo quid animi uostri super hac re siet:
faciam ut commixta sit; (sit) tragico[co]mœdia;
nam me perpetuo facere ut sit comœdia,
reges quo ueniant et di, non par arbitror.
quid igitur? quoniam hic seruos quoque partis habet,
faciam sit, proinde ut dixi, tragico[co]mœdia.

Prologus, 52-63. *Plauti Comœdiæ*, edited by W. M. Lindsay, Oxford, 1903, 2 vols.

²⁴ Altho, as Vossius observes, "In veteri tamen comœdia etiam Deum inducebant." *Poet. Instit.*, II, xxiv, 8.

²⁵ *Dictionarium Latino Græcum* (first ed., 1502).

that the modern so-called tragicomedy is a complete misnomer.²⁶ Romantic critics occasionally attempted to stretch the Plautine definition to conform to their own views of the type. For example, Giraldi states that the tragicomedy of Plautus illustrates the mixed type of tragedy recognized by Aristotle; and the anonymous critic of Speroni's tragedy of "Canace" likewise finds occasion to identify the Plautine play with the Aristotelian tragedy of double plot, and further claims that Plautus called the "Amphitruo" a tragicomedy not only on account of the mingled characters, but also because of the happy ending.²⁷

As mentioned above, Plautus is usually accredited with being the inventor of the name tragicomedy. No doubt the word was taken over by the drama of Renaissance Europe from the example of Plautus, whose "Amphitruo" was widely known in humanistic circles during the sixteenth century. Yet the Roman playwright cannot be considered the inventor of a name to denote a mixed type of play any more than he can be said to have been the first to mingle the features of tragedy and comedy. The name tragicomedy really owes its origin to the Greek comic poets, whose plays—dating from an era preceding Plautus—survive only in fragments or titles. The meager records of these lost dramatists preserved to us by Byzantine lexicographers throw a little light on an unnoticed chapter in the early history of tragicomedy. These early accounts indicate that a certain Anaxandrides,²⁸ one of the most highly esteemed writers of the so-called Middle Comedy, wrote a play entitled *Comædotragœdia*;²⁹ and that a lost play by a later Athenian comic poet, Alceus,³⁰ likewise bore the title of

²⁶ *La Pratique du Théâtre (Whole Art of the Stage, IV, 5, 146)*. Cp. below, p. 185-6.

²⁷ See below, p. 31, note 11.

²⁸ c. B. C. 404-330. See Meineke, *Fragmenta Comicorum Græcorum* (1839-57), I, 371.

²⁹ *κωμικοτραγῳδία*. For metaphorical use of the word, see Porphyrius in Stobæus' *Florilegium*, XXI, 28; also Porphyrius' *Epistle ad Marcellum*, above, p. ix, note 3.

³⁰ Contemporary of Aristophanes.

Comædotragædia.^{29 31} Also, Dinolochus,³² a celebrated Syracusan comic poet, is said to have written a play similarly designated. Little may be gleaned of the character of these so-called "comico-tragedies." It has been supposed that they were comedies with some tragic admixture possibly not unlike the "Amphitruo" of Plautus, which very likely owes its name of *tragicomædia* to some such precedent. Their main interest here lies in the fact that from them really dates the origin of a name to denote a play compounded of tragedy and comedy, altho it was the variant form used by Plautus that ultimately survived. *Comico-tragicum*, however, may be found on the title of numerous plays of the neo-Latin period, where it apparently was quite as popular as the reversed form of *tragicomædia*.³³

There is probably no connexion between the *Comædotragædia* of these lost dramatists and the later *Hilaro-tragædia*³⁴ of Rhinthon, a Syracusan playwright who flourished in the reign of Ptolemy I, King of Egypt (a. 320-285 B. C.);³⁵ yet from the accounts of the Rhinthonica, as plays of this type were called, one may judge that they also represented some mingling of tragic and comic material. Practically the sole information about these plays is derived from early lexicographers,³⁶ on whose accounts Renaissance commentators based their conclusions regarding the type. The humanist Gregorius Giraldus states that the *Hilaro-tragædiæ* of Rhinthon were mixed of tragedy and comedy, "unde Tragicomædia dicta est."³⁷ Donatus affirms them to be related to satyric drama, and to be of a middle nature between tragedy and comedy.³⁸ And the impression generally regarding this lost species of drama seemed to be that it represented a mix-

²⁹ For mention of the *κωμωδοτραγῳδία* of Alcæus, see Lexicons of Harpocration, Photius, Suidas, under *ἀθηφάγος*. Cp. Meineke, I, 247.

³² Flourished B. C. 488. See Meineke, I, 247.

³³ See below, p. 23.

³⁴ *ἱλαροτραγῳδία*.

³⁵ Suidas, *Lexicon*, 1498.

³⁶ Suidas, Stephanos, Donatus, etc.

³⁷ *Historia Poetarum, Græcorum ac Latinorum* (1545).

³⁸ Prolog to *Adelphorum*, see Vossius, II, xxi, 1.

ture of tragedy and comedy, and was perhaps to be identified with tragicomedy itself.³⁹ At any rate, the practise of Rhinthon and his followers afforded another "classical" precedent to the champions of tragicomedy, and one which was made much of by Guarini and his followers.⁴⁰

So much, then, for the various ways in which the ancient drama has played a part in the development and history of tragicomedy. It is quite evident that a name to denote the intermediate species is not the sole inheritance that the classical drama has handed down to tragicomedy. Two other facts are evident: That the mingling of tragedy and comedy in some way or other far antedated the earliest of Renaissance tragicomedies; and, that the defenders of the mixed drama were not slow to make use of this ancient precedent to justify their own practise. On the other hand, the arguments advanced for reconciling tragicomedy with the teaching and practise of the ancients were as actively contested by those who opposed the free drama. For example, the opponents of the Italian tragicomedy scorned the idea that the new form could be accounted for as the offspring of the satyric drama. And, as the *Hilaro-tragœdia* was not a regular dramatic poem but a monstrous and abortive growth, nothing was proved by showing its similarity to tragicomedy.⁴¹ The detractors of the "Pastor Fido" were also fond of quoting Cicero on the best kind of oratory, "turpe comicum in tragœdia, et turpe tragicum in comœdia;" and one critic wished to know how anyone could produce tragedy and comedy together, when Plato in the "Republic" expressly asserted that the two forms were so distinct that the same writer could not produce them separately.⁴² Such objections continued to be urged against

³⁹ Modern scholarship seems inclined to regard the Rhinthonica as exhibitions treating of tragic subjects in the spirit and style of comedy. Some half dozen surviving titles indicate that the subject matter was that of tragedy; while the fact that they were called "merry tragedies" (*ἱλαροτραγῳδία*) and "chatter-writing" (*φλυαγογραφία*) seems sufficient proof of a burlesque or comic element.

⁴⁰ See below, p. 36.

⁴¹ Cp. Udeno Nisiely, *Proginnasmi Poetici* (1625), III, 53; see below, p. 44.

⁴² De Nores, *Apologia* (1590); see below, p. 37.

the practise as long as its defenders sought to reconcile it with classical precedent, and the arguments on both sides usually dwindled into absurd casuistry. The dispute, however, has an interesting and important place in the critical theorizing about tragicomedy that extended over three centuries.

(2) *The Medieval Heritage*

Turning from a consideration of the classical drama in its relation to tragicomedy, we are confronted with the question of what the species owes to the other great tributary of the modern drama, the medieval stage. This question has to do with an altogether different, and indeed more important, influence in the development of the form. Renaissance tragicomedy can hardly be accounted for as an outgrowth of classical practise; its connexion with the ancient drama was found to lie rather in the field of critical discussion. In the case of the medieval influence, these relations are reversed. No one sought to defend the mixed type of play or to account for its being by quoting the precedent of the indigenous stage; yet the defenders of tragicomedy, for all their claim that they were imitating the practise of the ancients in blending the tragic and the comic, were in reality only continuing the dramatic tradition of the middle ages, which knew no connexion with the drama of Greece and Rome. The vernacular drama, then, plays no part in the critical justification of tragicomedy, but its historical relation to the development of the type cannot be overlooked; for it can be shown that the religious drama of the middle ages in its very essence is a more direct preparation for tragicomedy than for any other dramatic form.

The heritage of the medieval stage to the popular drama of the Renaissance is well enough known to be but briefly indicated here. In almost every feature the latter-day drama, in spite of the efforts of humanists to conform it to classical models and ideals, betrays the dominant characteristics of its medieval ancestry. The discursiveness of the subject matter, the blending of tragic and comic, the love of poetic justice, the disregard for humanistic notions of decorum, and other departures from classical ideas of dramatic form and content,

which are so typical of the Elizabethan stage—and indeed of all Renaissance vernacular dramas;—all owe their origin to the religious drama of the middle ages. Consequently, the medieval dramatic heritage becomes an important consideration in accounting for the development of any dramatic form that arose after the influence of humanism had made itself felt on the indigenous stage. A pretty definite idea of what either tragedy or comedy owes to this medieval ancestry may be readily gathered from the early germs of each that appear in the religious plays. Let us see if tragicomedy is not even better represented in this common fountain-head. Altho the extant medieval drama of all countries preserves the same general features, the objective point here is the tragicomedy of England; and our results, therefore, will be based on an examination of the surviving fragments of religious drama of our forefathers.

If we grant that one conception commonly associated with tragicomedy is a serious action crowned with a happy ending, we find that the religious play by reason of its very subject matter lends itself directly to this aspect of the form. The miracle plays were usually founded upon Biblical narrative or some saint's life; their purpose was primarily to edify and to instruct; and they seldom failed to emphasize the moral lesson of the rewards for the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. The subject matter, being essentially serious, could furnish tragic situations and possibilities enough; but the inculcating moral purpose demanded that the play end in a triumph of righteousness, on which side the protagonists were usually arrayed. Happy endings, therefore, abound, even in the themes of the most serious cast. The favorite material for dramatic treatment seemed to be Biblical episodes of joyful outcome. Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac may have owed its popularity as a theme for presentation to the fact that the story was one of averted tragedy. The raising of Lazarus is also a theme of distinct dramatic value, and represents another form of the tragedy averted.⁴³ The whole series of plays

⁴³ Cp. the neo-Latin '*Ἀνάβιον, sive Lazarus Redivivus. Comadia nova et sacre* (1539), whose author, Joannes Sapidus, declared that it could also be regarded as a *tragicomadia*. Creizenach, *Geschichte*, II, 104.

leading up to the Ascension may be taken together as forming one great drama of horror and tragedy finally sealed with a joyful and triumphant ending in the Resurrection.⁴⁴

Death, indeed, is by no means absent in these early presentations of sacred material; but where it occurs, it is either the just punishment of the wicked; or, if the righteous are overtaken, the end cannot be considered calamitous because of the spiritual reward in store for their souls. Thus in the York pageant representing the death of Mary, the end is mitigated for the spectators by a closing scene showing Christ in Heaven sending his angels to fetch his mother to a seat right next the "high Trinite." Such also is the character of plays dealing with the lives of martyred saints; for the emphasis put at the end upon the heavenly consolation held out to the holy sufferer completely nullifies any emotions that his tragic death may have excited. The slaughter of the Innocents in the Coventry play of the Nativity is more than compensated by the announcement of the happy escape of the Child into Egypt. And in the unique Chester play of Antichrist, when Enoch and Elias and the four kings are slain by the arch enemy of Christendom, the proper *deus ex machina* descends in the person of the Archangel Michael, who destroys Antichrist, and, when that worthy has been dragged off to hell by devils, restores the prophets to life and leads them to Heaven amid joyful singing. Thus it appears to be characteristic of the religious drama that the tragic, where it occurs, is either averted, or relieved in some way by a joyful spiritual *dénouement*. Plays that end in anything approaching the spirit of Greek or Senecan tragedy are not to be found on the medieval stage. The nature of the subject matter and the distinct moral end in view are the circumstances of the early drama which preclude the possibility of the unrelieved tragic ending, with the resultant fact that much of the medieval religious drama has the cast of tragicomedy.

In one other respect the early national drama deserves

⁴⁴ Cp. Gayley, *Representative English Comedies*, p. xxii. It may be noted that the neo-Latin *Christus Redivivus* (1543) of Nicholas Grimald is called a *Comadia Tragica*. See below, p. 23.

notice as having an important bearing on the mixed type of play. The indiscriminate mingling of tragic and comic that the humanists decried in the popular Elizabethan stage is likewise a direct outgrowth of medieval dramatic tradition. With the secularization of the religious drama came the addition of the comic, often injected at random into serious themes, giving a play the effect of a mosaic of tragic and comic patches. The playwrights evidently felt the need of relieving the serious and austere Biblical material with lighter touches, and accordingly lost no opportunities that their subjects presented for comic portrayal of character and realistic touches of contemporary life. The idea that Noah's wife was a shrew may have been a tradition of long standing; at any rate, the scolding character of Mrs. Noah is made the most of in three of the four extant miracles that treat of the Flood. The character of Herod also seemed to offer an opportunity for burlesque. His "ranting" is the comic relief in many of the somber pageants where he appears, often furnishing sharp contrast to some tragic scene, as in the case of the wailing mothers in the Coventry play of the Nativity.

As a rule in the English miracles, the studied comic parts do not take the form of interruptions or disjointed by-play to the serious narrative. There is usually some evident attempt to blend the mirthful with the serious, associating the two motives by some connecting link, or by showing one as the outgrowth of the other, giving in a crude way the effect of dramatic counterpart or contrast. The murder of Cain in the Towneley group is made the more horrible by passing into the grotesque comedy furnished by the servant-clown Garcio. In the York cycle, the shepherds who are awaiting the sign of the Nativity attempt to mimic the singing of the angels. A cruder incongruity is found in the Digby play of the killing of the children of Israel, where the bereaved mothers, in a rough scene of horseplay, unite in beating one of Herod's soldiers for the murder of their children. In these and in other plays the comic is so closely interwoven with the serious that often it is not easy to tell where the one passes into the other. But the most striking and pretentious attempt to min-

gle contrary motives is furnished by the "Secunda Pastorum" play of the Towneley cycle. The sheep-stealing episode of Mak is a complete farce in itself, inserted in the very midst of the story of the Nativity; but the pastoral character of the piece and its *dramatis personæ* give it the necessary connexion to the enveloping main action, so that it really exists by virtue of its relation to the serious theme and not as a disconnected interlude.

However much these mixtures of pure comedy in serious material may fail to appeal to our own artistic sensibilities, we may be sure that the early playwrights were in no way conscious of violating propriety in giving their scenic presentations the grotesque contrasts of actual life. The mixture seemed to have been natural and spontaneous; perhaps it was even appreciated from the standpoint of producing a gain in artistic effect. At all events, this medieval fondness for tragic and comic effects close together persisted far into the Elizabethan drama, in spite of the efforts of classicists to combat it. We find it taking many forms in the later drama; for our purpose, it deserves attention as contributing directly to the latter-day idea of the possibility of a two-fold plot—one comic and one serious—in a single play, an idea that has to do with one of the most distinct tragicomic conceptions that grew up with the English romantic drama.

What is true of the miracle play is even more true of its later contemporary, the morality. In its serious theme and triumphant ending, as well as in its mixture of pure comedy, the latter form carries on the preparation for tragicomedy that the miracle play began. The moral conflict between the forces of good and evil gave plenty of opportunity for an action leading to a tragic catastrophe; but a happy turn of fortune saves the day, the end is crowned with a victory for virtue, and poetic justice is meted out to all. Viewed in this light, the early English moralities, tragic and severe as they are, partake more of the mood of tragedy averted than of any pure dramatic form.⁴⁵ Such plays as the "Castell of Perseverance"

⁴⁵ The usual death in a morality apparently gave the play the coloring of a comedy in the medieval conception of the term, as such later English

or the "Wisdom that is Christ"—to select two of the earliest and most important—for all their intense seriousness of purpose and troubled action, end happily, for victory finally rests with the symbolic protagonist in his contest with evil. A similar tragicomic scheme may be traced as well in the great majority of later plays of the sort, both moralities and moral interludes, in which a happy spiritual outcome is the necessary accompaniment of a didactic action which has as its end the inculcation of optimistic doctrine. But these need not detain us.⁴⁶ Suffice it to note at this point the insistence of the morality on the happy ending, in which respect the moral type directly paves the way for tragicomedy. Indeed, one or two of the earliest so-called English "tragical comedies" are only belated moralities.⁴⁷

A recapitulation of the religious drama, then, from the standpoint of its heritage to tragicomedy betrays two striking features that persist thruout the formative period of the *genre*, and contribute directly to the whole question of tragicomedy in England. First, the didactic purpose of the religious drama, evident in the miracle play but the essence of the morality, demanded a type of play that resolved a serious complication in a happy ending, happy at least as regards the fortunes of the righteous. The subject matter did not center about revenge, injustice, murder, crime—motives that would resolve the action in a general slaughter, a defeat of justice, or some unrelieved tragic ending. The predominant mood, indeed, is altogether serious, and tragic situations are frequent; but we have seen that they are only situations, the tragic never suffuses the action, it is usually averted, or at least confined to the background: and death, when it occurs, is either the wages of sin; or, if it befalls the holy protagonist, it loses its tragic coloring and fades into insignificance before the spiritual

moralities as the *Conflict of Conscience*, *Tyde taryeth no Man*, *Old Fortunatus*—all of which end in deaths and yet are called comedies—illustrate. See below, p. 65.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of this phase of the English morality, see Gayley, *Representative English Comedies*, p. lvii ff.

⁴⁷ *Glass of Government* and *Looking Glass for London and England*. Cp. below, pp. 63, 79.

triumph in store for the innocent sufferer. Second, the mingling of tragic and comic in the same piece is another expression of medieval dramatic taste. In this regard, the early playwrights were responding to an innate dramatic instinct to conform their scenic presentations to real life, where tears and laughter are never far apart; and in the English religious drama at least, the two contrasting elements are usually interwoven with some feeling for a resultant artistic effect.

These two traits of the religious drama make up the contribution of the middle ages to the later mixed drama of the Renaissance. In England they may be traced thruout the entire formative period of the *drame libre*, and of course are directly involved in the whole question of tragicomedy.⁴⁵

There seems to be no record of the use of the terms tragedy and comedy to denote the medieval productions of the vernacular English drama before the contact with humanism in the early sixteenth century. Apparently there was no thought among popular playwrights of associating the terms, which indeed were current thru the middle ages in other forms of literature,⁴⁹ with scenic presentations. Naturally, then, the other term of classical nomenclature, tragicomedy, was equally absent in the indigenous drama of western Europe before the revival of the classics had made it familiar. It is worth while noting, however, that with the introduction of humanism the name tragicomedy began to be applied to pure forms of the religious drama, both in the vernacular and in Latin. In France we find the terms attached to miracles early in the second half of the sixteenth century, a seeming appreciation that the religious play conformed more nearly to the mixed type

⁴⁵ The medieval contribution to tragicomedy has been approached wholly from the side of the religious play, which is the only medieval dramatic form that can be said to have any integral bearing on the subject. The folk drama, however, occasionally represents as well the crude essence of tragicomedy. For example, the medieval fondness for averted tragedy is illustrated in the St. George plays, where the action consists only in the mock death of one or more of the characters, and their restoration by the "Doctor."

⁴⁹ Cp. Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*; Lydgate's *Falls of Princes*.

than to either tragedy or comedy.⁵⁰ There is no instance of a similar recognition of religious plays as tragicomedies in the surviving drama of England; yet the earliest English plays so designated are indeed either belated moralities, or at least owe their classification to their essentially medieval character.

(3) *Neo-Latin Tragicomedy*

It has been seen that both the classical drama of antiquity and the religious presentations of the medieval ages furnish certain definite and distinct lines of descent to the intermediate type of play that flourished in the Renaissance vernacular drama as tragicomedy. To complete the early parentage of the species it remains to note its relation to the connecting link between classical and medieval drama represented by the movement of humanism. The neo-Latin scenic presentations of the early humanists, representing, as they do, a fusion of the conflicting dramatic ideals and methods of the two fountain-heads of modern drama, furnish the transitional step, in the union of the classical name and the medieval conception of tragicomedy, necessary before the fuller growth and development of the form in the later vernacular drama is possible.

Following the initiative of the humanist Pomponius Lætus and his disciples, who were the first to attempt a stage revival of the ancient drama at Rome some time in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, came the impulse to adapt the principles of classical dramatic art to original productions. Altho records are meager regarding this earliest humanistic activity in the drama, it is quite evident that Latin presentations of both Biblical and secular material followed immediately in

⁵⁰ The two earliest French plays to be called tragicomedies are the *Tragique Comedie Française de l'homme iustificé par Foy* (1554), a morality by Henry de Barran, and the miracle play, *Tragi-comedie. L'Argument pris du troisieme chapitre de Daniel: avec le cantique des trois enfans, chanté en la fournaise* (1561), by Antoine de la Croix. Dr. Lancaster in his dissertation treats of nine other French moralities and mysteries of the second half of the sixteenth century called tragicomedies. See p. 37 ff.; also below, p. 54.

the wake of the stage revival of Plautus and Seneca, which the study of Vitruvius is supposed to have aroused. It is significant for the history of tragicomedy that in one of the very earliest of these neo-Latin imitations that resulted from this revival of ancient drama at Rome we meet the name coined by Plautus centuries before in the prolog of his "Amphitruo" applied to an original production.

The "Ferdinandus Servatus" (1494)⁵¹ of the Italian humanist, Carlo Verardi, is the first play known to make use of the Plautine title *tragicomædia*. It seems that Verardi—who apparently was not a versifier—first drafted the play in Latin prose, whence it was put into heroics by his nephew Marcellino. An event from contemporary Spanish history, a madman's attempt on the life of King Ferdinand at Barcelona in 1492, furnishes the subject, which is made to assume a fantastic religious and allegorical cast in the author's treatment. Ferdinand, the champion of the Catholic faith, is represented as having laid waste the kingdom of paganism denoted by Pluto and the Furies. The denizens of the lower world plot vengeance. Tisiphone is despatched to earth and engages the assassin Rufus to murder the Christian king, promising him the empire of all Spain as a reward. The attempt on Ferdinand's life is made, and Isabella, terrified at the news that her husband is wounded, rushes from the palace and prays for his recovery. St. James appears in answer to her prayer, and the king then enters miraculously healed by the power of the saint. The play ends by the chorus exhorting all sovereigns to profit by the virtuous example of Ferdinand and Isabella.⁵²

It is to be noticed that our first Renaissance tragicomedy betrays the traits both of mediæval and classical models. In the chorus, versification, mythological names, and in some

⁵¹ Aug. 16, 1494, is the date of the edition recorded by Hain, *Repertorium Bibl.*, II, 474; but it is quite possible that the play was first printed the preceding year, as there is an undated edition bound with the author's earlier *Historia Bactica*, a play printed in 1493. Cp. Lancaster, p. 155 n.

⁵² For analyses of this play, see Creizenach, *Geschichte*, II, 9; Chassang, *Essais dramatiques*, p. 140-1; Lancaster, *The French Tragi-Comedy*, p. 24-5.

aspects of form, the classical influence is evident; on the other hand, in the pervading religious spirit, in the shifting of the scene from earth to hell, in the happy ending thru miraculous intervention, and in the closing moral exhortation, the play continues medieval dramatic tradition. That the author knew the rules of classic drama, and yet chose to disregard them in dramatizing subjects that departed from the stock themes of classical tragedy and comedy, is evident enough from the prolog to his earlier play, the "Historia Baetica" (1492), also a dramatization of contemporary history. Here Verardi, after expressly declaring the independence of his play from classical models, adds, "Let no one expect the laws of tragedy or comedy to be observed, for a true history and not a fable is to be acted."⁵³ The "Ferdinandus Servatus" would conform just as little to the classic moulds for tragedy or comedy, yet it is more than a mere history, as the event presented has distinct dramatic value. *Tragicomadia*, then, is the name hit upon by the author to describe the play. As in the "Amphitruo," the highest as well as the lowest characters are introduced; and, moreover, the dramatized event, the fortunate escape of the king from death, a subject which manifestly leans both to tragedy and comedy and yet is neither, is happily described by the Plautine term.

Thus the name *tragicomadia* was revived and introduced to Renaissance Europe thru the medium of a humanistic innovation, a Latin play of secular theme given the religious coloring of a miracle. Verardi's production, it seems, made little impression in Italy, despite the fact that it was presented at Rome with much pomp before the Pope and his colleagues, but it apparently found its way into Germany, if indeed it is the model for the next play to bear the new name.

"Tragicocomedia de iherosolomitana profectione illustrissimi principis pomeriani" by the German humanist, Johann von Kitzscher, is the title of a Latin drama printed at Leipzig in 1501. Like the "Ferdinandus," it is also a dramatization

⁵³ Requirat autem nullus hic comœdiæ
Leges ut obseruentur, aut tragœdiæ.
Agenda nempe est historia, non fabula.

from contemporary history; the action here centering on the pilgrimage of Bogislaw X, Duke of Pomerania, to the Holy-land, 1496-97. A series of lifeless scenes telling of the Duke's departure and his wife's grief in his absence until comforted by a letter of good news, make up the piece, which is then concluded by an account of the pilgrimage recited by the messenger. The prolog follows the "Historia Baetica" in declaring the drama to be neither tragedy nor comedy, but a true history;⁵⁴ this must account for the author's adoption of the novel title *Tragicocomedia*. There is no record that the play was ever anything more than a closet drama. It is important here only as it furthered the popularizing of the new name in humanistic circles.⁵⁵

The above two tragicomedies assume considerable historical importance if we presume that to their initiative is due the introduction of the name to the later humanistic drama that flourished thruout Holland, Germany and Switzerland. At all events, tragicomedies form an appreciable proportion of the great output of neo-Latin plays that flooded this part of Europe during the half century following the "Acolastus" of Gnaphæus in 1530. The type is chiefly represented among the plays of Xystus Betulius, Jacobus Schoepper, Hieronymus Ziegler and Martinus Balticus—schoolmen whose activities centered about Bâle, Dortmund, Rotenburg and Augsburg; but wherever humanism spread—to France, Spain, Portugal or England—traces of academic tragicomedies may be found, and are to be reckoned with in accounting for the dissemination of the new form.⁵⁶

These school dramas represent broadly the same fusion of classical and medieval dramatic conceptions noticeable in

⁵⁴ "I (the prolog speaker) shall present to you no harsh-sounding tragedy, no broad comedy, but something that has actually and truly happened."

⁵⁵ For an account of this play, see Gustav Bauch, *Dr. Johann von Kitzscher, Neues Archiv für Sächsische Geschichte und Altertumskunde*, 1899, XX, 286 ff.; Creizenach, *Geschichte*, II, 34.

⁵⁶ All known extant neo-Latin tragicomedies up to 1582 may be found conveniently listed, with data and references, in the admirable Appendix of Dr. Lancaster's dissertation, p. 155 ff. The number and importance of such plays after that date are negligible.

Verardi's "Ferdinandus Servatus." The medieval religious presentations underwent a radical modification in the hands of men who were versed in Plautus and Terence. Before the keener sense of dramatic value that the classical drama aroused, the vast cycles of Biblical story gave way to presentations of parables from the New Testament, or of the more dramatic themes from Old Testament and Apocryphal history. A division into acts, the introduction of the chorus, the versification and style, and many other characteristics of form and content, further betoken the influence of classical models. Yet in many other respects the humanists were only continuing medieval dramatic traditions. The same Biblical subject matter and edifying Christian purpose of the miracle plays were the stock elements of the school drama, tho secular themes entered later under the influence of Protestant controversy. The classical unities of time and place were generally totally disregarded, altho an occasional apology for the shortcoming occurs.⁵⁷ And popular admixture of comic characters and scenes in serious material evinces an even more noticeable medieval point of view on the part of the scholarly playwrights.

The school dramas, then, are really only Latin versions of medieval religious plays, of increased edifying purpose, given a veneer of classical form and diction. The happy ending is quite as prominent as in the vernacular miracles and moralities, for the themes continued to be chosen with the end in view of inculcating moral teaching; moreover, the classical models during the heyday of the school drama were almost wholly the comic poets, Plautus and Terence. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the humanists generally regarded their drama as "sacred comedy"—a term often used by them interchangeably with tragicomedy. Apparently the latter name was welcomed as a happy classical label for almost any play that the author so chose to designate, if we judge from the little uniformity with which it is applied. Plays bearing the title of *tragicomædia*, *comædia tragica*, *drama tragicomicum*, or

⁵⁷ Cp. the epistle dedicatory of Grimald's *Christus Redivivus*, below, p. 24.

drama comicotragicum,⁵⁸ are most frequent among the humanistic playwrights of southwestern Germany and Switzerland, altho the same practise is evident wherever the neo-Latin drama was cultivated. In Spain as early as 1538, a record of the University of Salamanca shows that Latin tragicomedies were represented there along with plays of Plautus and Terence as an annual academic feature.⁵⁹ And a record of the University of Coimbra in Portugal mentions a student presentation of a Latin tragicomedy of "Goliath" in 1550.⁶⁰ In both these countries vernacular tragicomedies considerably antedate traces of the Latin type; in England, however, tragicomedy first entered in humanistic form.

The "Christus Redivivus" (1543) of Nicholas Grimald is the earliest original composition of the few surviving neo-Latin plays of English humanism, and the only one written as a tragicomedy.⁶¹ The play is typical of its continental forebears: it presents a miracle play theme—the triumph of the Cross, allows the usual medieval admixture of the comic, and has the structure and style of classical comedy. The "Epistola Nuncupatoria" renders the play doubly interesting for our purpose, for here the author takes occasion to explain the title of *Comædia Tragica*:

"As to the question how the play itself may defend its title, it is evident that the first act ends in tragic misery, but the fifth and last is turned to joy and gladness: thus there is variety enough, now sadness, now joy is sown among all other intermediate parts."⁶²

⁵⁸ It is to be remembered that this form of the name does not go back to the Plautine source, but is taken over from the earlier Greek *comædo-tragædia*. See above, p. 8.

⁵⁹ A. Vidal y Diaz, *Memoria historica de la Universidad de Salamanca* (1869), p. 94. See Creizenach, *Geschichte*, II, 79 n.

⁶⁰ Braga, *Historia da Universidade de Coimbra* (1892), I, 559. See Creizenach, *Geschichte*, II, 80.

⁶¹ *Christus Redivivus, Comædia Tragica, sacra et noua. Authore Nicolao Grimoaldo. Coloniae Ioan. Gymnicus excudebat, Anno M. D. XLIII.* Reprinted by J. M. Hart, *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assn.*, XIV, no. 3, 1899. See also *Archiv*, CV, i; *Shakspeare Jahrbuch*, XXXVII, 277. From the dedicatory epistle it appears that the play was acted at Merton College, Oxford, about 1539. Cp. Chambers, *Medieval Stage*, II, 450.

⁶² "Quemadmodum enim quò res ipsa nomen tueatur suum, primum

It is significant to notice that Grimald, tho a humanist, has completely departed from the conception of tragicomedy in the "Amphitruo" by defending the term from the standpoint of the happy outcome of a tragic action. Yet, on the other hand, both the tragicomic character of the piece as well as its violation of the unities he further excuses by quoting classical precedent:

"But if anyone wonders either that I have compressed the history of many days and varying times into one and the same action, or that a sad and grievous beginning is given such a happy outcome: he ought to understand that I follow the author M. Accius Plautus, whose 'Captivi'—not to mention others—is fashioned to be acted while several days intervene, and from a sorrowful beginning even passes into a happy end."⁶³

The only other indication of the title name attached to English neo-Latin plays of this period is furnished by an undated and anonymous manuscript redaction of an earlier continental production. This unprinted composition entitled "Sapientia Solomonis: Drama Comicotragicum"⁶⁴ has been found to be only a reworking—with slight changes—of a play of the same title by the Augsburger Xystus Betulius, printed at Bâle, 1547.⁶⁵ There is no record of a performance of the English piece; but as the epilog contains a complimentary mention of a Princess Cecilia, it has been conjectured that the play was acted before Queen Elizabeth during the visit of the

Actum Tragico mœrori cedere, quintum uerò *et* ultimum iucunditatibus adeommodari *et* gaudijs: ita quò uarietas satietati occurrat, cæteris omnibus intermedijs, nunc lugubria, nunc festiua interseri." *Epistola*, p. 11. Cp. a similar apology in the *Epistola* of Petrus Philicinus's *Comædia Tragica, quæ inscribitur Magdalena Evangelica* (1544): "Et quia nescio quid Tragicum spirare videtur, libuit Tragicâ appellare comœdiam, ut nomen, rei conveniat."

⁶³ "Ac si quis miretur, uel quòd plurium dierum historiam atque diuersa tempora, in unam *et* eandem actionem coëgerim, uel quòd funestum *et* per-luctuosum principium, tam plausibilem sortiatur exitum: eum intelligere debere, me autorem sequi M. Actium Plautum, cuius præter alias Captiuei *et* compluribus interiectis diebus agi fingitur, *et* ex initio mæsto in lætum citâ finem transeunt." *Epistola*, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁴ Ms. Brit. Mus. No. 20061. See *Shakspeare Jahrbuch*, XXXIV, 224.

⁶⁵ The additions of the English manuscript appear to lie chiefly in some of the comic scenes and in the chorus. *Ibid.*, 323.

Princess Cecilia of Sweden at the English court, 1565-66. The prolog, following long-standing humanistic example, states that the play is not a comedy but a serious history, drawn from the sacred fount of truth.⁶⁶ The action has little unity, representing several episodes from the Biblical account of Solomon; and the whole production follows the usual formula for humanistic drama.

An analysis of all the humanistic Latin plays of the sixteenth century called tragicomedies would hardly show any fixed basis for their classification as such. The fact that humanists realized that most of their plays occupied a neutral position between classical comedy and tragedy, coupled with a natural desire on their part to give them a name sanctioned by ancient precedent, must account for the fact that many of them followed the initiative of Verardi in rehabilitating the Plautine term *tragicomædia*, or adopted the earlier Greek name in *drama comico tragicum*.

The position that neo-Latin tragicomedy occupies in the development of our subject is obvious enough. As humanism is the connecting link uniting the contrary forces of classicism and medievalism in all forms of literature, so humanistic tragicomedy represents a fusion of the preparations for the form that have been noticed in the ancient and medieval dramas. The humanist playwrights revived the classical name of *tragicomædia*, abandoned its Plautine connotation, and established it as a convenient and appropriate name to denote the prevalent type of religious drama—the play of serious theme and happy ending. It was but a step to extend the name to secular plays as well; and its introduction in the vernacular drama followed as a matter of course. Thus the early preparation for tragicomedy is given its finishing touch by the humanist playwrights; its further development concerns the vernacular dramatists and critics that followed.

⁶⁶ Poetam non habemus comicum

Hoc tempore: Ast historiam attulimus grauem

E fonte veritatis exhaustam sacro. *Ibid.*, 226.

CHAPTER II

EARLY FOREIGN DEVELOPMENTS

With the several tributaries of Renaissance tragicomedy determined, the next step in the examination of the form is to scan its early manifestations in the sixteenth century dramas of the continent that were the first to emerge from the trammels of the medieval stage in response to the quickening touch of humanism. In Italy, Spain and France, tragicomedy both appeared and attained maturity some years before it went thru the corresponding stages in England; and its early course abroad presents some developments that must be noticed both for their general interest and for their bearing on English practise.

The present chapter does not, however, pretend to give a detailed or exhaustive treatment of the foreign aspects of the subject. Tragicomedy as a dramatic type leads an almost negligible existence in the Renaissance vernacular drama of the sixteenth century, and with few exceptions plays of the name are so unimportant as to merit only passing notice. The early course of our subject abroad is of vital interest here rather on the side of critical opinion, particularly as represented in the Guarini controversy—a critical dispute now almost forgotten but embodying the most complete and momentous discussion of the theory and legitimacy of tragicomedy in the whole history of the species. The following pages, therefore, are intended only to outline in brief the main facts connected with the rise and growth of tragicomedy in Italy, Spain and France during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, with particular notice, however, of the Guarini discussion, and some attention to any other aspects of dramatic theory or practise of direct or related interest to the subject. In presenting this material no strict chronology is possible, as tragicomedy attains eminence almost simulta-

neously in all three countries. Yet Italy, as the fountain-head of the Renaissance, perhaps deserves first consideration, and then Spain and France in the order named.

(1) *Italy*

For our purpose the main interest associated with tragicomedy in the early Italian vernacular drama is pretty well restricted to the field of critical theory. The first few scattered plays to be printed under the title are hardly important except as they mark the initial attempts to introduce the name on the popular stage. Antonio Marsi's celebrated "*Cecaria*," a pastoral dialog which appeared as a tragicomedy in the edition of 1530, represents the earliest recorded instance of the sort, and has some interest in connexion with the later full-fledged *tragicommedia pastorale* of Guarini. The half dozen later pieces of the title name that cluster about the middle of the century have no particular claim to distinction. All appear to treat secular themes and to use the title term without explanation or apology, but otherwise have little in common. If ever acted, they were performed sporadically and by amateurs only; for it must be remembered that the Italian drama of this period was almost wholly academic, having little relation to the existing theater. At all events, as a factor in the development of a type form or in the formation of a critical theory of tragicomedy, these plays may be dismissed as negligible.¹ The first indications of a critical interest in the new species, strangely enough, are to be found elsewhere.

It apparently is in connection with a professed *comedia*, the "*Pescara*" of Luca Contile, written in 1541, that tragicomedy receives its very earliest vernacular interpretation in

¹ Besides the *Cecaria*, Dr. Lancaster records the following as the only Italian plays printed as tragicomedies before 1582; for full data and references regarding them, see *Appendix A* of his dissertation: *Apollo e Leucotoc*, by Francesco Sallustio Buonguglielmi, Florence (n. d.); *Potentia d'amore*, by Gerotheo di Magri, Ferrara, 1552; *La Cangenja*, by Beltramo Poggi, Florence, 1561; *Il Giudizio di Paride*, by Gio. Maria Scotto, Naples, 1566; *Il Ratto d'Helena*, by Anello Paulilli, 1566; and *Quintilia*, by Diomisso Guazzoni, Mantua, 1567.

Italy.² In the prolog of this obscure production—whose historical importance in critical theory has generally escaped attention—the author boldly maintains the right of his *comedia* to the title invented by Plautus in the “*Amphitruo*,” and in support of this claim offers the following new and original definition of the species:

“Tragicomedy, whereas in the beginning its actions are gentle, in the middle contains various sufferings and divers misfortunes, and in the end must subside into a general and complete repose.”³

This interpretation of tragicomedy, tho professedly based on Plautus, seems rather a conglomerate of the prevailing medieval notions of tragedy and comedy, which allotted to the former a tranquil beginning leading up to a tumultuous end and reversed the order in the case of the latter.⁴ At any rate, it is strikingly independent of the limitations imposed on the term by the classical playwright. To Contile it is not the mingling of characters that constitutes a tragicomedy, but a mingled action crowned with a happy ending; and to this scheme the play itself conforms. An incident from contemporary Roman life furnishes a number of complications, which dissolve at the end in a series of marriages.⁵ But the important thing to note is the fact that the first working definition of tragicomedy in connexion with vernacular drama departs completely from classical precedent and emphasizes the very features that later characterize the type.

Yet Contile, if the first, was not the only early expositor of a non-classical theory of tragicomedy. Two years later, in

² First printed in 1550, at Milan, as *La Comedia del Contile chiamata la Pescara*. The play, we learn, was originally called *Amicizia*. See Fontanini, *Biblioteca dell'Eloquenza Italiana* (1753), I, 374.

³ “La tragicomedia, come nel principio ha gli atti suoi tranquilli, nel mezzo contiene varie passioni, e diversi accidenti, nel fin bisogna che si riduca a una comune e salda quiete.”

⁴ For the ideas of tragedy and comedy that prevailed thru the middle ages, see W. Cloetta, *Beiträge zur Litteraturgeschichte des Mittelalters und der Renaissance*, Halle (1890), v. I.

⁵ For full account of this play, see Abd-El-Kader Salza, *Luca Contile Uomo di Lettere e di Negozi del Secolo XVI*, Firenze (1903), p. 133 ff. Cp. also, Walker, *Revival of the Drama in Italy* (1805), p. 54 n.

1543, we find much the same interpretation put upon the term by the far more important literary figure, Giraldi Cinthio; and this time in connexion with a *tragédia*. In the prolog to this author's third play, the "Altile," occurs the following significant passage:

"If in some respects the author has wished . . . to depart from ancient usage, . . . he has considered that this age requires it, in addition to the novelty of the tragedy just now born. But it seems to me that many of you have frowned at the mere name of tragedy, as if you had nothing to see but tears. But be content, for that which is to take place here today will have a happy ending: since tragedy does not carry with it so sad an augury that the outcome may not yet be fortunate. Such is the 'Ion' of Euripides, and the 'Orestes,' 'Helen,' 'Alcestis,' together with the 'Iphigenia' and many others which I pass by in silence. But if indeed you are displeased that this has the name of tragedy, if you like you may call it a tragicomedy (since our language uses such a term), from the ending in which it has conformed to comedy—after sorrows, full of joy."⁶

⁶ Se in qualche parte egli (l'Autore) ha voluta
. . . uscir dall'uso antico,

* * * * *

Stimato egli ha che quest'età il ricerchi,
Oltre la novità della Tragedia
Pur testè nata. Ma veder mi pare
Che di voi molti hanno turbato il ciglio
Al nome sol de la Tragedia, come
Non aveste a vedere altro che pianto.
Ma state lieti, ch'averà fin lieto
Quel ch'oggi qui averrà: che così triste
Augurio non ha seco la Tragedia
Ch'esser non possa ancor felice il fine.
Tal' è l'*Ione* de Euripide e l'*Oreste*
Helena, *Alcesti* con l'*Iphigenia*
Ed alcune altre che tacendo io passo.
Ma se pur vi spiacesse ch'ella nome
Avesse di Tragedia, a piacer vostro
La potete chiamar *tragicommedia*
(Poi ch'usa nome tal la nostra lingua)
Dal fin ch'ella ha conforme alla commedia,
Dopo travagli, d'allegrezza pieno.

⁷ Cp. Giraldi's earlier complaint, "Pure tragedy is not only disesteemed, but its very name is hateful to many." See *La Tragedia a chi legge*, appended to the *Orbecche* (1541).

So, due to popular distaste for bloody catastrophes,⁷ Giraldi offers a kind of tragedy that ends happily, and which, for this reason, he suggests may be called a tragicomedy, a term already introduced into the vernacular. Doubtless, however, he himself regarded this use of the word as a questionable innovation—for apparently the name was as yet in no great favor or usage;⁸ but the legitimacy of the happy ending admitted of no doubt, for did not the example of Euripides confirm it? Yet, even with this apologetic deference to ancient authority, elsewhere in the same prolog, Giraldi vigorously affirms the right of every poet to get away from the precepts, rules and examples of classical precedent, and be ruled by the conditions of his own age and the demands of his audience. Thus, the prolog is interesting not only as introducing the question of "tragedies of happy ending" and suggesting their identification with tragicomedies, but also as containing traces of a new or romantic criticism, which—without attempting to detract from the authority of the ancients—realized that some concession should be made to popular taste and the present era; and in this respect it anticipates the attitude of all later criticism in support of tragicomedy.

Evidently the dramatic innovation introduced by the "Altile" found favor. Of Giraldi's six subsequent tragedies, written between 1543 and 1562, five are similarly distinguished by the happy ending, two of which, the "Epitia" and "Arrenopia," have an especial interest in their contact with Elizabethan tragicomedy.⁹ One characterization satisfies for the group. All represent a neo-classic handling of romantic stories taken from the author's "Hecatommithi." Tho modeled in form and structure on Senecan and Greek tragedy, they anticipate the *drame libre* in subject matter, in mingling tragic and

⁷ Contile had declared that the people considered tragicomedy ridiculous; and the anonymous critic of Speroni, in his *Giudicio sopra la Tragedia di Canace e Macarreo* (1543), asserted that "this name of tragicomedy, introduced by Plautus among the Latins, is not much approved by the learned." *Opere di Speroni* (1740), IV, 72.

⁹ The same stories of these two plays are dramatized respectively in Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra* and Greene's *James IV*. See below, pp. 66, 80.

comic, in disregard of the unities of time and place, in the number and variety of the characters, in a rough and unpolished style, and above all in the innovation of a happy ending. All have themes involving plenty of action, romantic adventures, and tragic possibilities but no tragic catastrophes. Impending dangers are removed by some timely change of fortune: a favorite device is the return to life of the supposed dead; threatened executions are stayed by fortunate recognitions; and other tragicomic devices abound. A villain may suffer a deserved death; but for the virtuous the play ends in a general satisfaction.

The dramatic theory by which Giraldi defended this kind of tragedy is set forth at some length in one of his critical "Discorsi" (1554),¹⁰ the group of treatises so significant as marking the virtual beginnings of modern criticism. Here, as in the prolog of the "Altile," he again grounds his dramatic innovation in ancient theory and practise. The *tragedia di lieto fin* is the same type of tragedy described by Aristotle as mixed,¹¹ and recognized by him as the most pleasing to the spectators, and in which he has placed that most effective agnition, whereby fortune changes from misery to happiness and the characters are saved from death. Thus horror and compassion, the sustaining and necessary elements of all tragedy, are duly aroused, but tempered and rendered no less effective by the happy ending, which is both Aristotelian and more agreeable to popular taste. And notwithstanding that Seneca, the model of tragic art, has never attempted the tragedy of happy ending, he, Giraldi, has composed some of

¹⁰ *Discorso intorno al comporre delle Comedie, et delle Tragedia (Discorsi, Venice, 1554, p. 219 ff.)*.

¹¹ By a strange stretch of fact Giraldi goes on to identify this form with the tragicomedy of Plautus: "This kind of Tragedy (to which Aristotle gave the name of mixed) Plautus demonstrates in the Prolog of his *Amphitruo*, when he says, that in it lowly persons are mingled with the great and royal." He may have taken this idea from a similar opinion in the anonymous *Giudicio sopra la Tragedia di Canace e Macarao* (1543), where there is a reference to the mixed type of tragedy as "that which Aristotle well explains in his Poetics, and Plautus in the prolog of his *Amphitruo*." See *Opere di Speroni* (1740), IV, 72.

the kind—as the “Altile,” the “Selene,” the “Antivalomeni,” and others—but only, he hastens to add, “to please the spectators, and to be more attractive on the stage, and to conform more to the usage of our times.” As final stipulations for the form, he urges that the poet should so conduct the events of the play that the spectators be held suspended between horror and compassion clear to the close, and be allowed no intimation of the outcome; and moreover, that justice be equally distributed in the end, and the wicked expiate their crimes in death.

Thus Giralaldi defends and explains his innovation of a “tragedy of happy ending,” a form which in every essential—romantic plot, thrilling adventure, suspense and surprise, happy *dénouement*—is the most direct precursor of later tragicomedy that the early Italian drama affords. Yet he apparently was too much of a classicist to view his invention in any other light than that of the second kind of tragedy recognized by Aristotle and cultivated by Euripides, tho admitting that the “Altile” may be called a *tragicommedia* by such as deny it the title of tragedy. Yet Giralaldi is the most important figure in the history of tragicomedy before Guarini. In his expressed independence of the ancients, deference to popular taste, and appreciation of the theatrical value of suspended action and happy *dénouement*, he is far in advance of his time; while in his invention of a *tragedia di lieto fin*, he is the founder and first defender of a type of play heralding the romantic drama and differing from tragicomedy in name alone.

For our purpose, the historical bearing of the *tragedia di lieto fin* on tragicomedy is practically confined to Giralaldi. In regard to the future of the species, suffice it to add that the new kind promptly found its cultivators and detractors, and was the subject of at least one of the literary controversies that were the order of the day in Italy during the latter part of the sixteenth century. Following the appearance of the “Cresfonte” (1588), a play of the type by Liviera, appeared a complete excommunication of the *lieto fin* in a “Discorso” (1590) of the learned Faustino Summo, later an opponent of Guarini. This was followed by two pamphlets from Liviera in defense of the happy ending and another

attack by Faustino, all in the same year.¹² Even in the next century the "tragedy of happy ending" was a disputed practise, and playwrights who cultivated it seldom failed to cite the authority of Aristotle in its support.¹³ Moreover, unlike Giraldis, they jealously guarded the claim of their productions to the title of tragedy, protesting against the vulgar opinion that dubbed them tragicomedies on account of the happy ending.¹⁴ But the growing popularity in the seventeenth century of the name tragicomedy soon prevailed over such protests, and *tragedia di lieto fin* became one in name as well as in all else with *tragicommedia*.¹⁵ This brings us to the second and much more important Italian influence in the history of tragicomedy, that associated with Battista Guarini and his famous "Pastor Fido."

The "Pastor Fido" itself is only incidentally important here; as a play, its place is rather in the development of the pastoral, notwithstanding the author's claim that it was first and last a *tragicommedia* and only secondarily a *pastorale*.¹⁶ For us, its chief significance lies in the fact that it gave rise to a notable critical controversy over the question of the legitimacy of tragicomedy—a dispute that raged among the learned sophists of Italy for years following the play and even aroused echoes abroad, but which is now relegated to a forgotten niche in literary history as the Guarini controversy.¹⁷

¹² See Angiolgabriello di Santa Maria, *Biblioteca, e Storia*, Venice (1772-1782), V, 206 ff.

¹³ Cp. Giov. Ondedei, *Asmondo* (1615); Francesco Contarini, *Isaccio* (1615).

¹⁴ For example, see the Dedication to Giulio Strozzi's *Erotilla* (1615), in which the author claims for his play the title of tragedy in spite of the happy ending, adding, "I do not wish that others christen it a *tragicommedia*, because that would show a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word, and ignorance of the sense in which the ancients have used it."

¹⁵ For the general subject of the *tragedia di lieto fin* in Italy, see E. Bertana, *La Tragedia* (Storia dei Generi Letterari Italiani), Milan, 1906, p. 43 ff.

¹⁶ Below, p. 39.

¹⁷ A good account of this controversy is given by Rossi, *Battista Guarini ed Il Pastor Fido* (1886), pp. 238-252. Cp. also, W. W. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama* (1906), p. 206 ff.; Marsan, *La Pastorale Dramatique en France* (1905), pp. 58-66.

Yet before considering this important chapter in the critical history of our subject, it will be necessary to review briefly the main facts concerning the author and the play to grasp the situation in full.

In final form the "Pastor Fido" represented nine years of painstaking labor on the part of its author, Battista Guarini. Its inception dates from 1580 or 1581, the result no doubt of a cherished ambition of the author to produce a play that might rival in popularity the "Aminta" (1573) of Tasso. In 1585 the play probably first became known in manuscript, in which form it circulated for criticism among the author's friends and patrons several years before it saw the light in print. A number of times during this period, it seems, plans for presenting the piece were formed but came to naught; until at length the play was printed at Venice, December, 1589,¹⁸ and its popularity both as a poem and a stage play followed at once. The play itself sets forth a most ingeniously constructed plot, marred, however, by the interminable length of the action—nearly 7,000 lines, and an almost total lack of dramatic feeling. The story, founded on Greek romance, is a combination of materials and motives from a multitude of sources; the whole given the Arcadian setting, and bringing into play the usual pastoral machinery of love-chain, by-plot, balanced characters, and the other devices characteristic of the type. The plot, made intricate and complex by the various crossed love difficulties and the mistakes arising therefrom, brings the fortunes of the different characters into hopeless entanglement during the course of the action. The underlying motive has to do with the fulfilment of an oracle, which has declared that only can Arcadia be freed from a cruel tribute annually imposed by Diana when "two of divine race shall join in love, and the noble piety of a faithful shepherd make amends for the evil of a faithless woman."¹⁹ In the course of the story the beauti-

¹⁸ This first edition is dated, however, 1590.

¹⁹ Non havrà prima fin quel, che v'offende,
Che duo semi del Ciel congiunga Amore,
E di donna infedel l'antico errore

L'alta pietà d'un Pastor Fido ammende. Act I. sc. 2.

ful and noble nymph Amarilli is wrongfully accused of having violated her faith, and accordingly she is the victim chosen to fulfil the oracle. But the faithful shepherd, Mirtillo, who loves her, hopelessly—as he thinks, offers to die in her stead and is accepted. He is about to be sacrificed, when—by a happy discovery—it is learned that he is not an humble shepherd as supposed, but a lost son of the high priest Montano and therefore of the race of Alcides. Accordingly, the conditions of the oracle are already fulfilled in the mutual love between him and Amarilli—as both are of divine descent—and in his offer to die in her place. Arcadia is now freed from her tribute, and a happy end crowns the fortunes of the lovers.

Such a brief description of the “Pastor Fido” can give little idea of the play as a whole, but may indicate something of its position as intermediate drama, on which Guarini based his defense of the title *tragicommedia*, and about which the chief force of the dispute waged.

Even before the “Pastor Fido” appeared in print, it was made the object of attack. As early as 1587, a certain Paduan professor of moral philosophy, Giasone de Nores, published a “Discorso,”²⁰ setting forth the dependence of all poetry on moral and civil philosophy and the government of the state, and in which, without making direct allusion, he took occasion to pay his respects to the preposterous nature of tragicomedy, which he characterized as a “monstrous and disproportionate composition,” mixed of two contrary elements, unmentioned by Aristotle or any other renowned ancient, and not even defensible by the example of Plautus, who composed a tragicomedy; “he having never been esteemed for the observation of art, but only for the propriety of the Latin tongue.” And as to the pastoral, that was a form “contrary to the principles of moral and civil philosophy and the government of the Republic, so well founded for the public good.” Such being evident, “What consideration,” he concluded, “ought one to

²⁰ *Discorso Di Jason Denores intorno a que' principi cause, ed accrescimenti che La Commedia, La Tragedia, ed Il Poema Eroico ricevono dalla filosofia morale e civile, e da Governatori delle Reppubbliche* (Padova, 1587). See Guarini, *Opere* (Verona, 1737), II, 149–208.

have for that third kind of poetry which is called *Tragicommedia pastorale*?"

Guarini, who proudly boasted to be the inventor of the *tragicommedia pastorale*, and the author of the only one ever written since the beginning of time, accepted De Nores' criticism as a direct attack on the "Pastor Fido" and jealously arose in defense. The following year, 1588, under the pseudonym of *Il Verato*, a noted comic actor of the time, he launched a diatribe against the Paduan sophist, taking up his arguments in turn and refuting them with much virulence.²¹ Aristotle indeed may not have mentioned tragicomedy, but does he mention the poems of Dante or Ariosto? And if none of the other ancients have spoken of the form, have any, on the other hand, ever blamed it? Moreover, tragicomedy under other names was practised by both Greeks and Latins. The *tragedia di lieto fin* was used by Euripides and Sophocles and approved by the authority of Aristotle. Again, witness the *Hilaro-tragædia* of Rhinthon, and the early satyric drama which Aristotle mentions and Horace describes. Were they not mixtures of tragic and comic, and practised by the ancients? How, then, can the mixture of tragicomedy be disproportionate and without art? And as to the name *tragicommedia*, Plautus—whom you call a poetaster, but who has lived for sixteen hundred years while you were born yesterday—has introduced it, and why should not others be permitted to use it? Or, if you prefer, you may call it *Tragedia lieta* or *Commedia grave*.

Thus Guarini disposed of the objections raised against the irregularity of the form. But he devoted more attention to assailing the charge of his opponent that tragicomedy was a double *farole*, made up of two separate and contrary elements, tragedy and comedy. With painstaking care the nature of the piece is explained in detail. Such a composition as De Nores describes would be blamable. But tragicomedy is not a composite of pure tragedy and pure comedy. It is a third type,

²¹ *Il Verato ovvero Difesa Di quanto ha scritto Messer Jason Denores. Contra le tragicommedie, e le pastorali, in un suo Discorso Di Poesia* (Ferrara, 1588). Guarini, *Opere*, II, 209-308.

combining the parts of each that can stand together, uniting the elements they have in common: "From the one it takes the noble characters, not the action, the story, probable but invented, the emotions, stirred but tempered, the delight, not the sadness, the danger, not the death; from the other, the decorous mirth, the sober gentleness, the invented plot, the happy change, and above all the comic order." Such is the tragicomedy of Guarini—the imitation of a fictitious action, mixed with all those tragic and comic parts that can properly stand together in a single dramatic form, and in which the terror of tragedy is alleviated by reducing it only to the danger of death, and the whole tempered with the urbanity of comedy. Moreover, he asserts that "Poetry does not depend on sophistry and rhetoric; its scope is to delight, not to instruct." In short, tragicomedy is not open to any of the strictures of De Nores, but, on the contrary, it is proved to be a form of poetry "noble, ancient, simple, proportionate, and capable of every artifice belonging to a well-woven composition."

To this reply, the Paduan professor published an "Apologia" (1590),²² in which Guarini's arguments are dissected in turn, ridiculed as absurd, and the acrimony of the controversy increased by the counter-exchange of sarcastic personalities. The pamphlet is typical of the casuistical quibbling of the day. Much of the argument is given over to discrediting the possibility of lessening the tragic terror until only the danger of death remains. Such a proposition is a paradox; for "How," he asks, "can there be danger of death unless there be terror?" Plautus admits neither danger nor death in the "Amphitruo." Either, then, the Plautine play is not a tragicomedy, or *Il Verato* does not understand that form of poetry. That tragicomedy is an ancient poem is equally false. The "Cyclops" of Euripides is not a tragicomedy, as that contradicts the title its author gave it; and as to the *Hilaro-tragœdiæ* of Rhinthon and the satyric tragedies of Pratinas, they may be rejected as capricious compositions without art

²² *Apologia contro l'Autor del Verato, di Giasone de Nores, di quanto ha egli detto in un suo discorso delle Tragicommedie et delle pastorali* (Padova, 1590). Guarini, *Opere*, II, 309-375.

and contrary to nature. To the authors of such monstrous compositions as tragicomedies, the words of Cicero alone ought to suffice, "turpe comicum in tragœdia, et turpe tragicum in comœdia." "Let us be content," he urges, "with being now comic, now tragic, and not wish to be both at once, and in one turn of the sun."

The counterblast from Guarini appeared as "*Il Verato Secondo*" (1593).²³ In spite of the fact that De Nores had died in the interim, Guarini devoted a great part of this second pamphlet to scurrilous abuse of his late opponent, mingled with much petty cavilling over the personal side of the controversy. The object of the author is set forth under the four headings into which the work is divided: viz. (1) to declare the cheat of the sophistical apologist; (2) to defend the modesty of *Il Verato* against the immodesty of De Nores; (3) to prove that the poem defended by *Il Verato* is well defended and ill accused; (4) to prove that the poem mixed of tragic and comic parts, called by the author of the "*Pastor Fido*" a tragicomedy, is a legitimate poem of Aristotle. With the first two divisions we are not concerned. In the third, Guarini repeats his former arguments with much reiteration and some elaboration. In defense of the blending of tragic and comic elements he cites examples of the mingling of contraries in natural and physical phenomena. Heat and cold, dry and moist, unite in medial resultants. From the horse and the ass comes the mule; from pewter and copper, bronze; from sulphur and saltpeter, powder. The same is true in the arts related to poetry; in painting, two colors are united to form a third; in music, diatonic is mixed with chromatic, and chromatic with harmonic. The Republic itself is a mean between oligarchy and democracy. And just as from such mixtures results a third which is different from its component parts, so tragicomedy is the issue of two contrary elements and yet is apart from either. From beginning

²³ *Il Verato Secondo ovvero replica Dell' Attizzato accademico Ferrarese in difesa del Pastor Fido, contra la seconda scrittura di Messer Jason de Nores intitolata Apologia* (Firenze, 1593—really 1592). Guarini, *Opere*, III, 1-384.

to end it is always a mixed composition, and therefore is not liable to the censure imposed by Horace on poetry which begins in one manner and ends in another. The rarity of the form is only an argument in its favor : "Rare are the writers of tragicomedy, because rare are those who know how to make it." The true meaning of the *genre* title is explained at length. The "Pastor Fido" is not a pastoral, but a pastoral tragicomedy ; tragicomedy being the noun signifying the character of the story, and pastoral the adjective indicating that the characters are shepherds and not citizens.

Nor does the "Pastor Fido," Guarini concludes, need to base its defense on Rhinthon and Pratinas, whose works are no longer extant ; its masters are Sophocles and Euripides, and its art is based on the "Poetics" of Aristotle. This last proposition, that tragicomedy is Aristotelian, occupies the fifty pages that make up the fourth division of the treatise. The proof of this principle, it is maintained, is two-fold : first, tragicomedy indeed is unmentioned in the "Poetics," but one must concede that it is made with the same precepts of art, the same rules of nature, on which Aristotelian philosophy has founded other forms of poetry ; secondly, it is capable of proof that tragicomedy is so similar to one of the particular kinds mentioned in the "Poetics" that it can rightly be called a legitimate form of the philosopher. The latter argument is upheld by showing the close relation between the tragicomedy of Guarini and the tragedy of *doppia costituzione* recognized by Aristotle as belonging to the second class.²⁴ Both forms are mixed of tragic and comic parts, but in different ways : the Aristotelian form has a double outcome, tragicomedy a single one ; in the former both kinds of characters, the *migliori* and the *peggiori*, are equally important, in the latter the *peggiori* are only incidentally admitted. And while Aristotle does not call the second kind of tragedy a tragicomedy, yet he has admitted the principle of mixture on which it is founded, wherefore it follows that the much more unified mingling of tragic and comic parts of the "Pastor Fido" must be a *figliuolo legittimo* of the philosopher.

²⁴ Above, p. 3.

Thus ended Guarini's share in the controversy that his play had aroused. Some years later, 1599, he combined the material of the two *Verati*, omitting entirely the personal parts, into a "Compendio della Poesia Tragicomica,"²⁵ which appeared with the final revision of the text and his own notes on the play in the sumptuous 1602 edition.²⁶

The Guarini pamphlets make up by far the most important part of the controversy, which indeed had just begun. In them the author advances a formulated theory of tragicomedy, which he maintains is defensible on the grounds on which it is assailed—the authority of the ancients, and also on the plea of art to be free from the limitations imposed by such authority. As a champion of the liberty of art, Guarini occupies a position similar to that already noticed in the critical utterances of Giraldi. Never does he intimate a disregard for the rules of Aristotle or attempt to underrate their value; he revolts only against the limitations that their narrow application impose on the art of poetry. His position is that Aristotle treated of poetry that he found in his own time, and so long as poetry is constructed according to the universal laws of imitation laid down in the "Poetics," to demand that it forever conform to the specific kinds described therein is folly. Certainly, he urges, no one would condemn the "Divine Comedy" of Dante, the "Trionfi" of Petrarch, or the "Orlando" of Ariosto, all of which are new poetical forms and unrecognized in Aristotle. Why, then, cannot other new kinds as well be invented, so long as they are made according to the basic principles of art?

But Guarini's eagerness to prove that tragicomedy may be defended if necessary by ancient precedent shows that he was but half a romanticist. The Aristotelian tragedy of double ending practised by Euripides and Sophocles, the ancient satyric drama, the *Hilaro-tragedia* of Rhinthon, the "Amphitruo" of Plautus—all are turned to account to show the legitimacy of the mingling of kinds; not indeed that any of

²⁵ *Opere*, III, 385-469.

²⁶ The *Compendio*, altho finished by 1599, was not printed until 1601, when it appeared singly. See Rossi, p. 236.

these represent the artful and unified blend of tragic and comic parts of the "Pastor Fido"—for that has never been paralleled, but that they prove that the underlying principle is ancient, and not a monstrous invention of modern times. His respect for classical practise over modern is further evidenced by a total disregard of the Renaissance tragicomedies antedating the "Pastor Fido." While the work of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, is cited to defend the invention of a new poetic form, any reference to previous attempts at tragicomedy by moderns is carefully avoided.²⁷

Yet whatever Guarini's position may be among the critics of the later Italian Renaissance, he is primarily important for our purpose as the first expositor of a definite critical theory in support of modern tragicomedy. Briefly summarized, his idea of the form seems to involve a production which represents in every way—in action, characters, incidents, outcome, style—a tempered mean between the extremes of pure tragedy and pure comedy. Again and again he reiterates that "tragicomedy is not a compound of two *favole*, one of which is a perfect tragedy and the other a perfect comedy, nor is it a tragical history corrupted with the baseness of comedy, nor a comical tale contaminated with the deaths of tragedy, but it is a mixture of those tragic and comic parts which can stand together with probability."²⁸ With the great spread and popularity of the "Pastor Fido" this idea of tragicomedy was sown broadcast, and became part and parcel of the dramatic theory of the *genre* abroad. Its appearance in England will demand attention later.

The continuance of the controversy that followed in the wake of Guarini's controversy with De Nores need call for no special consideration. It was largely concerned with a rehashing of the arguments pro and con already advanced, and

²⁷ De Nores, indeed, mentions a play by "a certain Spaniard, entitled Calisto and Melibea," as the only tragicomedy known to him other than that of Plautus, but adds that he does not think that "it is yet approved by the judgment of those who proportion poetry with reason and with the rules of Aristotle." *Apologia* (ed. 1590), p. 29.

²⁸ Cp. *Il Verato Secondo* (*Opere*, III, 167).

turned from the general question of tragicomedy to the more particular subject of the "Pastor Fido" itself, without adding anything especially new or important to what had gone before. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Paduan rhetorician, Faustino Summo, devoted two of his twelve "Discorsi poetici" (1600)²⁹ to the questions of the dispute. In one he substantiated De Nore's in decrying tragicomedies and pastorals as illegitimate poesies by the rules of Aristotle, and in the other he critically dissected the "Pastor Fido" scene for scene. The same year saw the publication of "Considerazioni intorno al Pastor Fido,"³⁰ in which the author, Giovanni Malacreta, advanced a series of critical *dubbi*, censuring the art and construction of the piece. Other similar *dubitazioni* were immediately added by a Paduan professor, Paolo Beni, in a "Risposta" (1600)³¹ to Malacreta. In both these pamphlets the dispute turned entirely from the question of tragicomedy, and centered on absurd bickering over such aspects of the play itself as the probability of the story, the morality of each scene, the characters, the length, the style, and above all the name of the piece.

In the following year, 1601, two defenses of the play appeared. Giovanni Savio in an "Apologia"³² reiterated Guarini's arguments with much fulsome eulogy of both the author and his production. This pamphlet is in three parts. In the

²⁹ *Due Discorsi, L'uno contra le Tragicommedie, e le Pastoralì; L'altro contra Il Pastor Fido Tragicommedia Pastorale dell'illustre Signor Cavaliere Battista Guarini. Di Faustino Summo* (Padova, 1600), Guarini, *Opere*, III, 543-596.

³⁰ *Considerazioni intorno al Pastor fido dell'Eccellentiss. Sig. Dottor Giovanni Pietro Malacreta* (Venice, 1600). *Ibid.*, IV, 1-122.

³¹ *Risposta alle considerazioni o dubbi dell'eccellentissimo Signor Dottor Malacreta accademico ordito Sopra il Pastor fido con altre varie dubitazioni tanto contra detti dubbi e considerazioni, quanto contra l'istesso Pastor fido. Con un discorso nel fine per compendio di tutta l'opera. Di Paolo Beni* (Padova, 1600). *Ibid.*, IV, 123-300.

³² *Apologia Di Gio. Savio Venczianod. In difesa del Pastor Fido Tragicommedia Pastorale Del Molto Illustré Signor Cavalier Battista Guarino Dalle opposizioni fatteglì dagli eccellentissimi Signori Faustino Summo Gio. Pietro Malacreti, e Angelo Ingegno. Divisa in tre parti* (Venice, 1601). *Ibid.*, IV, 303-643.

first, the author champions tragicomedies in general. Why, he asks, if poetry is a mirror of human life, can it not be tragicomic? Is it possible that art wishes only to imitate the extremes, which are represented in tragedy and comedy, and not the mean, which is the perfection peculiar to tragicomedy? Moreover, "all the world approves of tragicomedies, and loves and admires the 'Pastor Fido' in particular." In Venice it has been printed fourteen times, in France not only printed but translated, and in England the same.³³ The second and third parts of the discourse are taken up with defending the "Pastor Fido" itself, maintaining that the play has unity, that it is not excessively long, that the nature of the story is tragicomic, that the title of "Pastor Fido" is well applied—a point of great dispute,—and lastly that the style is *mediocre*, that is, halfway between the styles of tragedy and comedy, and therefore, precisely suited to tragicomedy. The same exorbitant praise of the play was maintained by Orlando Pescetti in a "Risposta" (1601)³⁴ to the doubts of Summo, Malacreta and Beni, which thrashed over the already well-worn points of controversy without adding anything new. But it immediately brought forth a counter-reply from Summo in a republication of his former two "Discorsi" with a specific "Replica" (1601)³⁵ to Pescetti; while, on the other hand, a third defense of the "Pastor Fido" by Gauges de Gozze of Pescara is known to have circulated in manuscript about the

³³ The *Pastor Fido* was not, so far as we know, translated into English until the following year, 1602. Below, p. 104.

³⁴ *Risposta D'Orlando Pescetti All'undecimo (and dodicesimo) de' Discorsi poetici dell'Eccell. Sig. Faustin Summo. Risposta alle Considerazioni o Dubbi dell'Eccellentiss. Sig. Gio. Pietro Malacreta, Sopra Il Pastor-fido. D'Orlando Pescetti. Scioglimento de i Dubbi del M. R. Sig. D. Pagolo Beni mossi contra il Pastorfido Nella sua risposta alle considerazioni dell'Eccellentiss Sig. Dottor Malacreta accademico Ordito. D'Orlando Pescetti. Verona, 1601.*

³⁵ *Due discorsi, l'uno contra le Tragicommedie et moderne pastorali, l'altro particolarmente contra il Pastor Fido dell'Ill. re Sig. Cav. B. G. Con una replica dell'istesso autore alla difesa del detto P. F., pubblicata sotto nome di Orlando Pescetti et insieme una risposta del medesimo in difesa del metro nelle poesie e nei poemi, contro il parere del molto Rev. Sig. Paolo Beni, Venice, 1601.*

same time.³⁶ In 1603, a Sicilian, Luigi d'Eredia, arrayed himself on the hostile side with an "Apologia,"³⁷ disputing certain statements of Guarini; and similar echoes of the controversy continued on into the seventeenth century.³⁸ As late as 1625 we find one of the "Dialoghi"³⁹ of Lodovico Zuccolo devoted to praise of the pastoral; while at the end of the same year, Benedetto Fioretti (Udeno Nisiely) in his "Proginasmi Poetici" declared tragicomedy to be "a monster of poetry so enormous and counterfait that the centaurs, the hippogriffs, the chimera, in comparison with it have graceful and perfect parts."⁴⁰

During all this time the fame of the "Pastor Fido" spread, and grew to be quite commensurate with the critical discussion that it had aroused. Its popularity dates from its first appearance, and steadily continued in spite of hostile criticism, as testified both by stage performances—which became increasingly frequent toward the close of the century both in public and private theaters in all the chief cities of Italy—and more particularly by innumerable editions and translations of the text. In Italy the 1602 edition claimed to be the twentieth imprint of the play.⁴¹ The seventeenth century produced not less than forty editions in Italian, and the next century contributed as many more. A French translation was made probably as early as 1593;⁴² in 1602 appeared Spanish and English versions; and later the play was turned into German, Greek, Polish, Swedish, Dutch, Indian and Persian, not to mention two Italian dialects and various renderings in Latin. The influence thus brought to bear in commending the practise of

³⁶ See Rossi, p. 247, note 2.

³⁷ *Apologia di D. Luigi di Eredia nelle quale si difendono Teocrito e i doviesi poeti ciciliani dalle accuse di B. G. et per incidenza si mette in disputa il suo P. fido*, Palermo, 1603.

³⁸ See F. Foffano, *Ricerche Letterarie* (1897), p. 234; Rossi, p. 248 ff.

³⁹ *Il Guardino ovvero della eminenza della pastorale, Dialoghi di Lodovico Zuccolo*, Venice, 1625.

⁴⁰ *Proginasmi Poetici*, 5 vols., Firenze, 1620-1639. *Proginu.*, 51-53 treat of tragicomedy.

⁴¹ Rossi tabulates eighteen known editions before this date. See p. 314.

⁴² Rossi, p. 237.

tragicomedy to the romantic playwrights of the seventeenth century needs no further comment.

(2) *Spain*

To Spain belongs the distinction of having produced the earliest vernacular tragicomedy known, the famous "*Celestina*," entitled in the 1502 edition "*Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*."⁴³ This composition, which is more a prose romance in dialog than a proper drama and could never have been intended for stage production, presents in a series of twenty-one acts the well-known story of the passion of Calisto for Melibea, its attainment thru the help of the enchantress Celestina, and its tragical ending in the death of all the chief characters. While the plot turns on a romantic and tragical love story, the main interest centers more on the realistic picture of contemporary life afforded by Celestina and the minor characters, in which respect the play is closely allied to Plautus and Terence. The Senecan catastrophe, however, destroys the force of the piece as a comedy, and hence the classification of tragicomedy, which the prolog of the 1514 edition explains as follows:

"Others have contended about the name, saying that it ought not to be called a comedy, because it ends in sorrow and mourning, but rather termed a tragedy. The author himself would have it take its denomination from its beginning, which treats of pleasure, and therefore called it a comedy. So that I, seeing these differences, between their extremes have parted this quarrel by dividing it in the midst, and call it a tragi-comedy."⁴⁴

This use of the *genre* name as an arbitrary compromise between the claims of a piece to the title both of tragedy and comedy is common enough among early tragicomedies; but the Renaissance connotation of the mixed title practically always involves the happy ending as a first requisite. The "*Celestina*," therefore, due to its tragic catastrophe, is virtually anomalous as a tragicomedy; and can neither be

⁴³ The first extant edition of the *Celestina* dates from 1499, but the play has been assigned as early as 1483. Fernando de Rojas is the supposed author of the greater part of it. For a full summary of the critical opinions as to date and authorship, see edition of H. Warner Allen (*Library of Early Novelists*), 1908, Appendix II, p. 303.

⁴⁴ Translation of James Mabbe, 1631.

reckoned an important influence in shaping the form of later tragicomic drama nor the conceptions that were becoming associated with that species, altho, due to its tremendous popularity and wide dissemination thruout western Europe in translations and adaptations, it doubtless contributed to the spread of the name.⁴⁵

The second link connecting early Spanish drama with tragicomedy is furnished by a group of plays of the title name found in the dramatic work of the Portuguese playwright and actor, Gil Vicente. These productions, ten in number, date from 1513 to 1533 and are composed indiscriminately in Castilian, Portuguese, or in both tongues. Eight are of the nature of festive interludes, written for special gala occasions at the court of King Manuel.⁴⁶ They are all slight compositions, animated and fanciful, drawing on classical mythology and medieval allegory for subject matter, and admitting a local element in some comic and realistic admixture. The other two are more pretentious attempts at actual drama, presenting episodes from chivalric romance and containing more of the elements of the coming national theater.⁴⁷ In every case the title distinction seems to have been conferred with the same indiscrimination and lack of purpose already noticed in the earliest vernacular tragicomedies in Italy. Thus, while of considerable importance in the development of the Spanish drama, as tragicomedies Vicente's plays have chiefly a curious and historical interest.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ The *Celestina* was known in translated or redacted form in Italian, French, English, German, Dutch and Latin. Among the many later Spanish imitations may be mentioned one, a prose continuation by Sancho de Muñon, which took over the genre name: *Tragicomedia de Lisandro y Roselia* (1542), reprinted in *Coleccion de Libros Españoles raros ó curiosos*, Madrid, 1872, III. The influence of the *Celestina* in England will call for attention later.

⁴⁶ *Exortação a la Guerre* (1513), *Côrtes de Jupiter* (1519), *Fragoa d'Amor* (1525), *Templo d'Apollo* (1526), *Nao d'amores* (1527), *Serra da Estrella*, *tragicomedia pastoril* (1527), *Triumpho do Inferno* (1530), and *Romagem de Aggravados* (1533).

⁴⁷ *Don Duardos* (1525) and *Amadis de Gaula* (1533).

⁴⁸ On Vicente's tragicomedies, see Creizenach, *Geschichte*, III, 190 ff.; Schack, *Geschichte*, I, 174-5; Lancaster, pp. 27-28, 156. The tragicomedies

So much for the tragicomedies that prelude the real national Spanish drama as it came into being toward the close of the sixteenth century. Tragicomedy by name does not seem to have commended itself to playwrights during the period between Vicente and the first great master of the Spanish drama, Lope de Vega.⁴⁹ Conditions had not made for interest in dramatic distinctions. The few attempts to create a popular drama had had no dependence on classical precedent or foreign example, but had followed unhindered along the lines of medieval heritage ; and dramatic theory was a thing yet unknown in Spain. Moreover, the dramas of this period are few in number, diverse in form, and undecided in character ; and, while some are of tragicomic plot, they offer no particular interest here. It was with Lope de Vega and his invention of the so-called *Comedia de Capo y Espada* that the Spanish drama first took definite and fixed form ; and it is in relation to this aspect of the national theater that the later question of tragicomedy in Spain has to do.

The character of the Cloak and Sword drama is well known. It is distinctly an outgrowth of the *drame libre*, national in spirit and popular in appeal, and with much the same independence of rules and precepts characteristic of similar developments abroad. Personages from the upper walks of society occupy the leading rôles ; gallantry is the moving force ; and the emphasis is primarily directed on the plot, usually an invented story of intrigue, comprising a sentimental or romantic interest, full of complications and action, and melodramatic in the extreme. As a type form, the Cloak and Sword drama is properly neither tragedy nor comedy. On the one hand, it is full of violence, fighting and bloodshed ; on the other, it has

are reprinted in Vol. II of Feio and Monteiro, *Obras de Gil Vicente*, Hamburg, 1834.

⁴⁹ In fact, beside those already mentioned, only two Spanish tragicomedies are recorded before Lope de Vega, about 1587. They are, an anonymous moral representation entitled, *Tragicomedia alegórica del paraíso y del infierno* (1539)—imitated from Vicente's *Auto de moralidade* (1519)—and Juan de Timoneda's *Tragicomedia llamada Filomena* (1564), a sort of interlude treating the story of Tereus and Philomela. See De Moratin, *Orígenes del Teatro Español*, Paris (1838), pp. 78, 94.

a happy ending and always admits some sort of comic by-play, often in the shape of an underplot shadowing the main design.

Thus Lope, out of the traditions of his predecessors, developed a new kind of drama, which was independent of the strictures of Renaissance dramatic theory, and which in theme, characters, action and style was an intermediate between Renaissance notions of tragedy and comedy. Yet in spite of its essentially composite character, the new form was almost invariably denominated *comedia*, doubtless by reason of the prevalence of happy endings, which would naturally give the preference to the milder of the only two terms of dramatic nomenclature known to the national theater. Whatever the reason, among playwrights *comedia* grew to be the accepted denotation for every type of drama from farce to tragedy—excepting the religious auto—in defiance of its traditional connotation. Occasionally the more discriminating made use of the title *tragicomedia*;⁵⁰ but as a rule all dramatic distinctions were dissolved in the one term *comedia*, which, as the seventeenth century progressed, came to be only an equivalent for drama in general.⁵¹ Among critics, however—and by the time Lope was embarking on his public dramatic career, Italian criticism was beginning to claim its opponents and adversaries in Spain—the new Cloak and Sword drama, by reason of its mingled character, was frequently hailed as tragicomedy, and condemned or defended accordingly. This brings up the whole question of the critical dispute over the legitimacy of the Spanish national drama, which was waged thruout the first

⁵⁰ Schack, in speaking of the little discrimination used by playwrights in classifying their plays, notices that when Lope himself employs the term *tragicomedia* in the superscription, in the dedication or preface he returns to *comedia*. *Geschichte*, II, 75 n.

⁵¹ In 1668 Juan Caramuel Lobkowitz wrote: "*Comadia* has a broader meaning than *tragadia*; in fact, every *tragadia* is a *comadia*, but the inverse is not true. The *comadia* is the representation of an historical or fictitious event, and can have an happy or an unhappy issue. In the first case, it simply keeps the name of *comadia*, in the second, it is called *comadia tragica* or *tragi-comadia*, or again *tragadia*. Such is the true distinction of these words, altho others can find fault with it." *Primus calamus*. Campanie, 1668, t. II (*Rhythmica*), p. 701. On this general subject, cp. Morel-Fatio, *La Comedia Espagnole du XVIIe Siècle*, Paris, 1885.

quarter of the seventeenth century between the detractors of Lope, on the one hand, and his defenders, on the other, and which ended in a virtual vindication of the popular theater.⁵² The national drama confessedly disregarded the unities, set at naught the authority of the ancients, and mingled tragic and comic. The classicists protested, and the disciples of Lope arose in defense; and thus ensued a critical controversy, which—it is interesting to note—so far as it touched tragicomedy, strongly echoes the earlier Guarini discussion.

Yet Lope himself, while the inventor of a tragicomic type of play, was not the uncompromising defender of that species of drama as Guarini had been. In theory at least he was a classicist himself, but a classicist who realized the inadequacy of the rules for practical playwriting; and it is in this spirit that he formulates his dramatic creed and states his position in regard to the tragicomic character of his dramatic invention. Thus in the “Arte Nuevo de Hacer Comedias” (1609), he expressly says:

“In mingling the tragic and comic, and Terence with Seneca (from which results a species of monster like the Minotaur), you will have one part of the piece serious and the other farcical. But this variety pleases very much. Nature herself gives us the example of it, and it is from such contrasts that she gains her beauty.”

The mingled drama, then, judged by the canons of art, is distinctly improper, but the exigencies of popular taste demand it,⁵³ and, moreover, it is not wholly without support, for the example of nature sustains it. Such is Lope’s apology for tragicomedy; a more unqualified vindication he left to his later disciples.

In the meanwhile, however, the rigid exponents of classicism were not silent. Lope’s defense of his dramatic creed

⁵² For accounts of this controversy, see Menéndez y Pelayo, *Historia de las Ideas Estéticas en España* (Madrid, 1884), Vol. XI, chap. X; Schack, *Geschichte*, II, 505 ff.; Morel-Fatio, *Les Défenseurs de la Comedia*, *Bulletin Hispanique* (1902), IV; Martineche, *La Comedia esp. en France* (Paris, 1900), chap. I.

⁵³ Elsewhere in the same treatise Lope declares: “After all, it is the public who pays for these absurdities, ’tis but just that it be served to its taste.”

was followed by a number of critical rejoinders from classicists who contested his doctrine and harshly assailed the irregularity of the national drama, lamenting that modern playwrights disregarded the rules of art to cater to the taste of the Spanish public, that they introduced kings in comedies and vulgar persons in tragedies, that their plays were medleys of everything and were contrary to reason, nature and art.⁵⁴ Among protests of this sort, that expressed in the "Tablas Poéticas" (1616) of the learned Francisco Cascales may be taken as typical of the extreme classicist's abhorrence of the contemporary drama, its defiance of rule and its mingling of *genres*. The so-called comedies of the day, he maintains, altho they end happily, are not comedies; for they contain tragic adventures, revolutions, affairs of honor, duels, wounds, deaths, and like measures opposed to the comic genius. They are hermaphrodite creations, monstrosities of poetry. Nor can they be permitted as tragicomedies, for "there is no such thing in the world as a tragicomedy, and if that title has been given to the 'Amphitruo' of Plautus, it has been done inconsiderately." The purposes of tragedy and comedy are diametrically opposed and cannot be united. "Banish, banish," he concludes, "the monstrous tragicomedy straightway from your thoughts, for its existence is an impossibility according to the laws of art. I grant you gladly that almost all plays represented on our theaters are of this kind; but you will not deny me that they are made against the laws of reason, nature and art."⁵⁵

On the other hand, apologists of the national theater straightway arose to contest these objections. In the same year of Cascales' "Tablas Poéticas," a certain poet of Valence, who wrote under the pseudonym of Ricardo del Turia, published an "Apologético de las comedias españolas,"⁵⁶ in which he de-

⁵⁴ Cristóbal de Mesa, *Rimas* (1611), and Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa, *Plaza universal de todas las ciencias* (1615), p. 515, and *El Pasajero* (1617); cp. also, Antonio López de Vega, *Heráclito y Demócrito* (pr. 1641). See Menéndez y Pelayo, XI, 433-437.

⁵⁵ *Tablas Poéticas* (1779 ed.), pp. 165-7, 187-8. See Menéndez y Pelayo, XI, 429; Schack, II, 509 ff.

⁵⁶ Reprinted by Morel-Fatio, *Les Défenseurs de la Comedia* (*Bulletin Hispanique*, IV, 1902), p. 47.

fended the tragicomic nature of the Spanish drama with arguments taken directly from Guarini. The popular *comedia* he admits is no comedy, properly speaking, "but a tragicomedy, which is a mixture formed from tragic and comic, taking from the one the noble characters, grand action, pity and terror, and from the other the particular subject, the laughter and pleasantries;⁵⁷ and no one," he continues, "can consider this mixture improper, since it is not repugnant to nature and to poetic art, wherein noble and lowly persons are mingled in the same story." Kings and servants are joined in the "Œdipus" of Sophocles, and even beasts are introduced by Aristophanes. Moreover, tragicomedy is not a composition of two separable parts, as some have thought, but a unified mixture blended according to the principles of philosophy.⁵⁸ Nor need it call philosophy or metaphysics to its support or even the successful example of foreign poets, but it is vindicated sufficiently by its appeal to popular taste and its great success on the Spanish stage.⁵⁹

Other defenders of the national *comedia*—or *tragicomedia*, as it was often interchangeably called—only reasserted the arguments of Ricardo. The independence of art from ancient rules on the ground that nature is the first and last guide of all poetry, is again maintained by Alonso Sánchez, in a contribution to an "Expostulatio Spongiæ" (1618), published by the disciples of Lope in answer to an attack on their master. If Lope has discarded the ancient rules, he has respected the principal precept of art, which is to imitate nature; and if the Spanish *comedia* is to adjust itself to the rules and laws of the ancients, it will run contrary to nature and the foundations of poetry.⁶⁰ Much the same position is taken by Francisco de la Barreda in his "El mejor Príncipe Trajano Augusto" (1622). "Why should we not mingle the happy and the sad," he asks, "if nature mingles them?" Moreover, the ancients have joined laughter and tears, and united the noble with the lowly,

⁵⁷ Cp. Guarini, above, p. 37.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ See *Bulletin Hispanique*, IV, 48 ff.; Menéndez y Pelayo, XI, 467-9.

⁶⁰ Menéndez y Pelayo, XI, 459 ff.

as Æschylus and Euripides bear witness.⁶¹ And Tirso de Molina, in the last and most convincing of all the apologies for the Spanish drama, following the same argument, reiterates, "What wonder if the *comedia* oversteps the laws of its predecessors and constantly mingles the tragic with the comic, producing a pleasant mixture of those two opposite poems?"⁶²

Thus the drama of Lope, vindicated by critical theory as well as by popular verdict, rode triumphantly over all opposition and became established as the national species. In retrospect the following facts are evident: That the Spanish *comedia*, as it took shape at the close of the sixteenth century, was a dramatic species frankly irregular in more ways than one, especially in mingling tragic and comic; whence it came about that in critical opinion at least it was frequently identified with tragicomedy; and furthermore, that in reply to critical assaults, a group of apologists arose, who, strongly influenced by Guarini, upheld the tragicomic character of the national species on three counts—the example of nature, the precedent of the ancients, and the approbation of the people; and lastly, that these arguments prevailed and the Spanish *comedia* remained a pure product of the *drame libre*.

(3) *France*

Tragicomedy by name appeared independently both in the Italian and Spanish vernacular dramas before it showed itself in France, where its introduction is doubtless to be accounted for as one of the many literary heritages that the latter country owes to the earlier Renaissance activity of her two peninsular neighbors. Not until the middle of the sixteenth century is there record of a French play of the title name, altho it is certain that the form was not unknown—to the learned at least—at an earlier period.⁶³ Yet from the middle until the close of the century the frequent appearance of

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 479-80.

⁶² *Cigarrales de Toledo*, 1624, reprinted by Morel-Fatio, *Bulletin Hispanique*, IV, 43; see also Menéndez y Pelayo, XI, 473; Schack, II, 560.

⁶³ For example, Rabelais. *Pantagruel* (1533). IV, 12: "Alors soyez prests, et venez en salle jouer la tragique comedie, que vous ay espousé."

so-called tragicomedies among plays of the popular theater indicates that the new name was commending itself to French vernacular playwrights even more generally than to their comrades in Italy and Spain. And moreover, at the close of this formative period, tragicomedy in France had ceased to be sporadic and was rapidly assuming the character of a definite dramatic kind, which was destined to flourish in the next century as the most popular stage form before the period of classicism. As this whole question of the origin and development of French tragicomedy has been made the subject of a detailed investigation by Dr. H. C. Lancaster,⁶⁴ it will be enough here to review briefly the main facts of the situation and indicate their relation to the development of tragicomedy generally.

Contrary to the precedent of Italy and Spain, where the earliest vernacular tragicomedies are found to be plays of secular theme, in France the first productions of the name are religious presentations of direct medieval outgrowth; and, moreover, of the same type are the majority of all their immediate successors, at least those antedating the ascendancy of Alexandre Hardy on the Parisian stage about 1600,⁶⁵ which may be taken as a logical *terminus ad quem* of the formative period of the species in France.⁶⁶ In other respects, however, early French tragicomedies differ little from their foreign prototypes. They are all plays of the indigenous stage, showing classical influence only in some aspects of external form, and having little in common unless it be the happy ending. Brief accounts of a few of the most representative may sufficiently indicate the general tenor of the group.

As typifying the essentially medieval cast of most of early French tragicomedy, the two very first plays to bear the name are good examples. The "Tragique Comedie Françoise de

⁶⁴ *The French Tragi-Comedy, Its Origin and Development from 1552 to 1628* (Dissertation, Johns Hopkins, 1907), which I have drawn upon freely for the material of this section.

⁶⁵ Of the sixteen known tragicomedies cataloged by Dr. Lancaster as written before this date, eleven are Biblical or religious and only five secular.

⁶⁶ Lancaster, p. 36, note 2.

l'homme iustificé par Foy," written by Henry de Barran in 1552, is a pure morality, given an act and scene division but displaying all the essentials of the medieval type: didactic purpose, character abstractions, symbolic action and moral struggle. Between the forces of good and evil man's fate trembles in the balance, but truth and righteousness prevail in the end and his ultimate salvation is accomplished. On the other hand, the second play of the name is a Biblical mystery, entitled "*Tragi-comédie. L'Argument pris du troisieme chapitre de Daniel: avec le cantique des trois enfans, chanté en la fournaise*," the work of Antoine de la Croix in 1561. Barring the classical features of prolog, epilog and chorus, the play offers nothing distinctive over any other crude presentation of Old Testament story; altho, as the title indicates, the subject is one of marked tragicomic possibilities—a fact of some significance in estimating the probable interpretation of the Plautine term among vulgar playwrights.

As already intimated, the majority of sixteenth century French tragicomedies conform to the types represented by the above two plays, being essentially medieval in spirit, crude in construction and obscure in authorship. Yet one notable exception occurs. In 1582, a regular dramatist, Robert Garnier, produced the "*Bradamante*," a tragicomedy which, as it most nearly anticipates the form of the later developed product, is usually considered the real starting-point of the *genre* in France. Here the subject is a tale of romantic love, taken from the "*Orlando Furioso*," and given a freedom of treatment surprising in a classical playwright. A complicated plot, serious action, comic admixture and crowning happy *dénouement* for all concerned, further identify the play not only with the conventional type of French tragicomedy as established by Hardy and his contemporaries, but with corresponding developments in other countries as well. Doubtless to the author, however, it was the general departure of his piece from classical dramatic form rather than the happy solution of tragical entanglements that called forth the mixed title.

Be this as it may, the "*Bradamante*" stands as a tragicomedy well worthy the name, and as such it is practically

isolated in sixteenth century French drama.⁶⁷ From the extremes of morality, mystery and even farce⁶⁸—which make up the sum of contemporary pieces of the title name—it is evident that anything approaching a definite conception of tragicomedy was far from existing in France before the seventeenth century. Probably the name connoted to those who used it only an indefinite idea of dramatic freedom,⁶⁹ and was reckoned applicable to any type of irregular composition that fell short of tragedy. A more positive inference would be hard to substantiate. France had as yet produced no critical exponent of the *drame libre* to champion the cause of tragicomedy. Even recognition of the form in contemporary French criticism of any sort is rare. Vauquelin, indeed, in his “Art Poétique” (1574–1589), mentions the mixed play of happy ending—perhaps with the “*Bradamante*” in mind—but only to condemn the name of tragicomedy to denote it, since tragedy itself may end happily as ancient precedent proves.⁷⁰ It was well into the seventeenth century before the Guarini controversy aroused an echo in France.

⁶⁷ Many editions testify to the wide dissemination and long continued popularity of the *Bradamante*; and as an acting play it long kept the boards in the early seventeenth century. Cp. Rigal, *Alexandre Hardy*, p. 93.

⁶⁸ *La Nouvelle tragicomique* (1597) of Marc de Papillon is a farce, if a drama at all.

⁶⁹ This seems to be the idea conveyed by the following lines from the preface of *La Nouvelle tragicomique*, the sole instance of any expressed apology or explanation for the use of the title among these plays:

Je n'ensuy en cette œuvre icy
La façon de l'ardeur antique,
C'est pourquoi je la nomme aussi
La Nouvelle tragi-comique. See Lancaster, p. xii.

⁷⁰ On fait la Comedie aussi double, de sorte
Qu'avecques le Tragic le Comic se raporte.
Quand il y a du meurtre et qu'on voit toutefois,
Qu'à la fin sont contens les plus grands et les Rois,
Quand du graue et du bas le parler on mendie,
On abuse du nom de Tragedie;
Car on peut bien encor par vn succez heureux,
Finir la Tragedie en ebats amoureux:
Telle estoit d'Euripide et l'Ion et l'Oreste,
L'Iphiginie, Helene et la fidelle Alceste. Lib. III, l. 163 ff.

It is evident, then, that tragicomedy remained an uncertain quantity during the formative period of the French drama. As yet it had existed only sporadically among various surviving forms of the medieval stage, without having aroused critical approval or special condemnation. But with the new era in French drama ushered in by the coming of Alexander Hardy to Paris in 1593, and with the impetus that the irregular drama received in his hands, tragicomedy enters on a period of new existence; its future is determined and its success assured. With Hardy and his contemporaries it is the play of romantic theme and happy ending—the formula anticipated by the “*Bradamante*” of Garnier—that becomes the accepted vehicle for tragicomedy, and by the side of which all other types of the species sink into insignificance.

As to Hardy himself, the virtual founder and the chief exponent of the new kind, abundant information is readily accessible in the able treatise of Rigal.⁷¹ His dramatic activity at the Hotel de Bourgogne, extending from 1593 to 1631, was the paramount influence in the formation of the modern French theater; it broke the classical tradition and transformed the drama from an academic to a popular performance. In fecundity he was only rivaled by Lope himself;⁷² and as about half of his forty-one surviving plays are tragicomedies, his real contribution to the form may have been—as Dr. Lancaster suggests⁷³—proportionally enormous. Thus we may gain some idea of the importance of his position in the development of the subject. If Hardy cherished any theory of tragicomedy, it is not preserved. He was a practical playwright, bound by no literary laws or authority, and probably cared little or nothing for the theoretical side of the drama so long as his plays received the plaudits of the crowd.⁷⁴ Indeed, a distinction between some of his professed tragedies and tragicomedies is not always easily drawn, which goes to show his evident un-

⁷¹ *Alexandre Hardy et le Théâtre français à la fin du XVI^e et au commencement du XVII^e siècle* (Dissertation, Paris, 1889).

⁷² His plays are estimated by Rigal at seven hundred.

⁷³ *The French Tragi-Comedy*, p. 101.

⁷⁴ In his own words, “Everything which is approved by usage and the public taste is legitimate and more than legitimate.”

concern for any guiding critical theory. The general characteristics, however, of his tragicomedies and those of his chief contemporaries, Du Ryer and Mairet, sufficiently indicate the conventional lines that the form was assuming in France at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

First of all, tragicomedy, being *per se* an irregular form, displayed all the qualities of the *drame libre*: it confused the methods of romance and drama, exercised the greatest freedom in structure and materials, and threw overboard the unities and classical decorum generally. Secondly, the more distinctive features of the form comprised a romantic story of classical or popular source, love as a main motive, personages of mingled social station, and the happy ending for the chief characters, in spite of an action admitting violence, bloodshed and sometimes deaths. Such plays were directly akin to the "tragedies of happy ending" that Giraldis had earlier invented for Italy, and not far removed from the contemporary "Cloak and Sword" *comedias* of Lope. All were independent outgrowths of the irregular theater, and all owed their tragicomic character to the exigencies of popular taste, which was, more than anything else, the real *raison d'être* for the form.

During the first thirty years of the seventeenth century the number and evident popularity of tragicomedies of the type cultivated by Hardy and his disciples furnish sufficient evidence that the form—on the French stage at least—had attained the dignity of an independent *genre*. Yet not until 1628, the year Hardy's last volume appeared, did the new species receive the critical justification that defenders of the free drama had already given it in Italy and Spain. In this year appeared the famous *Preface* of François Ogier to the second edition of the "Tyr et Sidon," a tragicomedy by Jean de Schelandre. As Spanish influence at this time was beginning to be rife across the Pyrenees, it is quite probable that this first French manifesto of the irregular drama owed something to the earlier activity of the defenders of the Spanish *comedia*; and doubtless some echo of the Guarini discussion had reached the author as well. At all events, the arguments advanced by Ogier in support of the irregular theater and its independence of classi-

cal tradition were already familiar abroad, and his comments on tragicomedy only reiterate the opinions that Ricardo del Turia and Francisco de la Barreda had earlier advanced in Spain. The fact that the ancients themselves invented the satyric drama as relief from pure tragedy, he maintains is sufficient excuse for the practise of tragicomedy, "which has been introduced by the Italians"; and those who object to it on the ground that it departs from classical custom, are contending only against the name, for the thing itself is as old as the "Cyclops" of Euripides. Moreover, the mingling of tones and the variety of events furnished by the mixed species best represent real life:

"For to say that it is unseemly to present in one piece the same persons, treating now of serious, important and tragic affairs, and straightway of ordinary, vain and comic matters, is to ignore the condition of men's lives, of whom the days and hours are oftentimes mingled with laughter and tears, with contentment and affliction, according as they are moved by good or by evil fortune. . . . Nature herself has shown us that joy and sadness hardly differ one from the other, since the painters observe that the same muscles and nerves that make us laugh likewise make us weep and put us in that sad state when we feel a great grief."

A few years later another partisan of the irregular theater, the author of the anonymous "*Traité de la disposition du poème dramatique*" (1631-2), similarly arrayed himself on the side of tragicomedy. But these treatises were the work of scholars rather than of playwrights. Wherein they treat of tragicomedy, it is only to defend the mingling of tragic and comic as a natural and legitimate practise, sanctioned by the example of nature, most agreeable to popular taste, and, if you like, supported by ancient precedent as well. No theory of tragicomedy or modern definition of it is attempted. What, in fact, appears to be the earliest French explanation of the species, it is interesting to note, is an obvious adaptation from Guarini. The preface of Mairet's "*Silvanire*" (1631)—a *tragicomédie pastorale*, by the way—in describing the play, states: "In regard to the story, . . . it is not of two-fold constituency, but mixed, and in subject it is not simple, but composite. The mixture is made of tragic and comic parts, in

such a way that the two, blending agreeably together, have finally a joyous and comic catastrophe."⁷⁵

But by this time the critical war was already on in France between the classicists and the independents, which was to result a quarter of a century later in the triumph of classicism and the virtual abandonment of tragicomedy. With this question we are not concerned. It is enough to note here the outgrowth of French tragicomedy from the traditions of the medieval stage, its development in the hands of Hardy into a definite and independent dramatic kind, its ascendancy in popular favor during the early seventeenth century, and its various analogies and points of contact with the practise abroad.

⁷⁵ Cp. Guarini, above, p. 37. An even closer imitation appears later in connexion with the *Cid*: "Ce beau et divertissant poeme, sans pancher trop vers la severité de la tragédie, ny vers le stile railleur de la comédie, prend les beautez les plus delicates de l'une et de l'autre: et sans estre ny l'une ny l'autre on peut dire qu'il est toutes les deux ensemble et quelque chose de plus." Georges de Scudéri, *Observations sur le Cid*, 1637.

CHAPTER III

THE BEGINNINGS OF ENGLISH TRAGICOMEDY (1564-1600)

In the preceding pages the various influences in the historical growth of the modern drama that contributed to the ultimate realization of a dramatic form known as tragicomedy, have been noted and set forth, and the early history of the new product briefly reviewed in Italy, Spain and France. Thus fortified, it is possible to approach the development of the subject in the national drama of England, which was the last of all to receive the innovations borne by the tidal wave of the Renaissance. It is the purpose of the present chapter to deal with the formative period of English tragicomedy, extending from 1564, the approximate date of the first vernacular play so named, to 1600, a convenient, if somewhat arbitrary, *terminus ad quem*.¹ Within these limits, which set off a period when the English drama concerned itself little with dramatic distinctions and proprieties, tragicomedy cannot be said to have left a blazed trail. As in the corresponding stage of development abroad, English tragicomedies so-called of this period are few, sporadic, and dissimilar; so that an attempt to trace the evolution of the later developed product from evidence afforded only by the extant data dealing directly with tragicomedy falls short. For a more adequate understanding of the beginnings of English tragicomedy, it will be necessary to supplement this evidence by noticing generally the mingling of tragic and comic as it appears in the early drama, and the relation of its various aspects to the development of the subject.

As previously seen, the mingling of tragic and comic in one dramatic piece came into the Renaissance vernacular drama

¹ 1600, while denoting no landmark in the development of the subject, may be taken as the approximate date of certain changes in the drama that materially effect the growth of tragicomedy.

as the direct outgrowth of medieval tradition, while the application of the classical name of tragicomedy to denote the mixture was due to neo-Latin initiative. It is to the fusion of these two influences that the first tragicomedies in the national drama of England owe their being. If we disregard the numerous moralities and other belated irregular forms that carry on the tragicomic traditions of the medieval stage, and concern ourselves only with the plays actually denominated tragicomedies in the surviving portion of the first real drama, our foremost consideration comprises three plays, "Damon and Pythias," "Appius and Virginia" and the "Glass of Government." It will be remembered that the earliest of these is considerably antedated by an English neo-Latin *Comædia Tragica*, the "Christus Redivivus" (1543) of Nicholas Grimald; and also that an undated redaction of a continental *drama comico-tragicum*, the "Sapientia Solomonis" finds a place in this early period.² But both are academic productions, and, while of considerable historical importance, may be omitted here so far as the national drama is concerned. It is with the three plays first mentioned that vernacular tragicomedy in England begins. An examination of them will show how the innovation gained its initial foothold on the popular stage.

The "Damon and Pythias" of Richard Edwards, acted at court by the Chapel Children in 1563-64, serves as a connecting link between the classical and the popular plays.³ While undivided into acts, devoid of chorus, and admitting popular and romantic elements, it treats a classical theme, is comparatively independent of the toils of the morality, and in style and diction shows traces of Roman drama. The prolog gives an interesting exposition of the author's dramatic creed. After insisting on the observance of decorum, from which he himself "doth not swarve," he introduces his play and explains its title thus:

Lo here in Siracusæ th' auncient towne which once the Romaines
wonne,

² See above, pp. 23-25.

³ S. R. July 22, 1567, "ye tragecall comodye of Damonde and Pethyas."
Printed 1571.

Here Dionisius pallace, within whose courte this thing most strange
was donne.

Which matter mixt with myrth and care, a just name to applie,
As seemes most fit, wee have it termed, a tragicall commedie.

The play is a "tragicall commedie," then, because the story is a "matter mixt with myrth and care," yet the author has previously taken pains to express his allegiance to decorum and the school of Horace. As Edwards was a scholar, he must have been acquainted with neo-Latin tragicomedies, which probably served him as a precedent for his vernacular innovation, and also for his explanation of the mixed title. Crude as the play is, its treatment of the familiar story of Damon and Pythias is a good example of the averted tragedy; the serious interest consisting in the peril hanging over the life of Pythias, which is fortunately warded off at the end by the timely arrival of Damon. Intermixed with the serious theme is a run of loosely connected farce and comic business; and it is usually taken for granted that the classification of "tragicall commedie" is due to this comic intrusion in serious matter, the mixture of "myrth and care." Mirth, however, was a word used so loosely in the early drama that it need not necessarily refer here to the comic by-plot;⁴ more likely it relates to the happy solution of the tragic situation, which would render the author's conception of tragicomedy more in keeping with that of his probable models, the neo-Latinists.

In the "Tragicall Comedie of Apius and Virginia,"⁵ by R. B.—conjectured to be Richard Bower, a Master of the Chapel Children—we have another court play of classical theme, probably produced about the same time as "Damon and Pythias." This piece is much nearer a morality than the play of Edwards, admitting a Vice and several personified abstractions among the *dramatis personæ*, and, like that play, undivided into acts and scenes and showing little of the externals of classical structure. Furthermore, the author offers no ex-

⁴ For example, the morality *Pride of Life* similarly advertises in the prolog a "spelle of mirth and eke of kare," yet contains no comic by-play.

⁵ Entered S. R. July 22, 1567-8 as a *Tragedy*; printed 1575.

planation of the mixed title. Farcical scenes are freely interspersed, but have no connexion with the main action, which is wholly tragic, consisting in the voluntary death of Virginia to avoid dishonor at the hands of the wicked judge Appius. She is beheaded, and the head exhibited; but at the close of the play, the glory of her martyred name is inscribed in a tome by "Memorie, Justice, Rewarde and Fame," while an ignominious death overtakes the evil-doers. Thus, in spite of the tragic ending, the play is still a comedy in the broad medieval interpretation of the word; tragical indeed, but a comedy nevertheless, for the morality idea of a triumphal spiritual *dénouement* is preserved, the wicked are punished and the innocent sufferer attains the reward of the righteous. Such must be the explanation of the title "Tragicall Comedie."

Both the above plays were popular performances, acted at the court by children, and of the same general character in content and form.⁶ The third English "tragical comedy" is wholly different. The unique "Glassè of Gouvernement. A tragicall Comedie so entituled, bycause therein are handled aswell the rewardes for Vertues, as also the punishment for Vices" (1575), the work of the versatile Elizabethan courtier and man of letters, George Gascoigne, is a belated follower of the Prodigal Son type of school play. Apparently it was only intended for a closet drama, as it is more a Calvinistic treatise on education than an acting play, and written in prose entirely. In form it is as regular as it is didactic in purpose. Some characters and situations are strongly reminiscent of Roman comedy, while the thesis is an exposition of the contrasted lives of good and evil doers, with the moral end continually kept in view. The plot is the story of two pairs of brothers who are placed under the instruction of a wise and pious pedagogue. The younger two follow the moral teaching they receive, and pursue the path of virtue, while the elder

⁶ With them should be mentioned one other play, the lost *Palamon and Arcyte* of Richard Edwards, acted before the Queen at Christ Church in 1566. Judged from the dramatized subject, Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, and the account of the performance that survives, it is to be classed with the author's extant "tragical comedy."

pair become incorrigible and soon fall victims to vice. The latter are despatched to a neighboring university in the hope of separating them from their evil influences, but there they only continue their perverse ways; and finally it is reported that they have reaped the wages of their sins. The virtuous sons, meanwhile, have become, one a secretary to the Landgrave and the other a famous preacher. In this way the author works out his moral thesis of the "rewardes for Vertues" and the "punishment for Vices"—a double outcome whose mingled emotional effect is voiced in the concluding speech of the play:

"I thanke you, Sir. My Masters, the common saying is, clap your handes; but the circumstance of this wofull tragicall comedie considered, I may say iustly vnto you wring your handes: neuerthelesse a leaue it to your discretion."

It is to be noticed that Gascoigne's apology for the title term does not follow that of Edwards. The "Glass of Government" is a "tragicall Comedie" because it rewards virtue and punishes vice, the two-fold outcome so characteristic of a morality, and later the underlying principle of satirical comedy, and which, in fact, is reminiscent of the Aristotelian "opposite catastrophe for the good and for the bad"—the ending prescribed by the philosopher for the second kind of tragedy.⁷

It is significant that our first three English tragicomedies are all the work of scholars, men who had every opportunity to be familiar with Renaissance dramatic activity, both at home and abroad, in humanistic circles and among vernacular imitators. Bower and Edwards had been in turn Masters of the Children of the Queen's Chapel, while Gascoigne had studied at Cambridge and fought in Holland. All undoubtedly borrowed the name and the idea of "tragical comedy" from humanistic precedent, which conceived of the form only as a species of comedy that for one reason or another deserved the qualifying adjective "tragical." Various evidence serves to bear out the view that the vernacular tragicomedies were likewise regarded only as a form of comedy. For example, ✓ the title page of the earliest edition of "Damon and Pythias"

⁷ Above, p. 3.

describes the play as an "excellent Comedie"; again, the author prefaces the play in the prolog with a discussion of comedy writing; and finally, we know from the contemporary opinion of Puttenham—later echoed by Meres—that Edwards's reputation was as a writer of "comedy and interlude." Similarly, it is plain that the idea of comedy was uppermost in the mind of Gascoigne in regard to the "Glass of Government," for both in the prolog and in the prefaced argument he so terms the play. Lastly, it has been seen above that the alteration of the tragic theme of Appius and Virginia for morality purposes had the effect of conforming that play to the broad medieval conception of comedy. Like instances of a distortion of the term in its modern acceptation are not infrequent in the later English moralities. The "Conflict of Conscience" (1581) of Nathaniel Woodes, which ends in the suicide of the hero, is called an "excellent new Commedie," probably by reason of the repentance of the protagonist before his death. "Tyde taryeth no Man" (1576), by George Wapull, calls itself a "Moste Pleasant and merry Commodity," altho admitting a disastrous end for the unworthy; the same is true of the later "most pleasant and merie new Comedie, Intituled, A Knack to knowe a Knaue" (1594); while "Old Fortunatus," tho ending in a moral tragedy, was printed in 1600 as a "Pleasant Comedie."

It must be remembered that tragedy and comedy, not to speak of tragicomedy, were slippery terms at best in this period of the popular stage. The national drama that sprang from the conflict of the medieval forms of miracle and morality with the revived classic models of tragedy and comedy, would ill fit into the definite moulds defined for the latter by classical critics. The natural result was a loose and careless use of the terms of classical nomenclature, and a confused and hazy idea of their real meanings. Many early plays show that often little or no differentiation was made between tragedy and comedy. Of the three extant miracle plays of Bishop Bale, printed in 1538, two are designated comedies and one a tragedy, but with no apparent warrant for the distinction. Thomas Preston's "Cambyses" (S. R. 1569-70) is called "A

Lamentable Tragedie" in one place and a "Commedy" in another; while the title of the morality "All for Money" (1578), by Thomas Lupton, which advertises the play as a "Moral and Pitiful Comedie," is contradicted by the closing lines of the prolog, where the piece is styled "a pleasant tragodie." In the face of so little discrimination in the notions of tragedy and comedy, it will not do to assume a very sophisticated understanding of the term "tragical comedy" on the part of the few who used it during this period.

Before leaving the early group of English tragicomedies, mention should be made of one other play of the period which clearly belongs to the same class, altho without the title distinction. The "Promos and Cassandra" (1578) of George Whetstone, which could lay claim to the name of "tragical comedy" with the same propriety as "Damon and Pythias," is described in the title as "The Right Excellent and famous Historye, of Promos and Cassandra; Denuded into two Comical Discourses. . . . Wherein is showne, The Ruyne and ouerthrowe, of dishonest practises: with the aduancement of vpright dealing." This play, which takes its story from Italian romance⁸—the same theme that Shakspeare later developed in "Measure for Measure," was evidently intended for popular performance, altho there is no record of its presentation. It is even freer from morality elements than "Damon and Pythias," and displays considerably more feeling for classical form and regularity, being carefully constructed, divided into acts, and the whole separated into two plays, as Whetstone says in the preface, for the sake of decorum. But with all the author's boasted observance of decorum, the serious theme is accompanied with the usual medley of farce and songs characteristic of every popular play; and, while the author evidently regards his production as a comedy, tragedy is impending thruout. However, the tragic complications are finally resolved, no deaths occur, and the play ends happily in the reappearance of the supposedly murdered Andrugio,

⁸ The *Hecatommithi* of Giraldi, who dramatized the same story in his *Epitia* (c. 1562), a *tragedia di licito fin*. Above, p. 30.

the pardon of Promos, judged to death by the King, and a general reconciliation.

The most interesting thing in connexion with this play is the dedication, in which the author sets forth his theory of dramatic art—founded no doubt in part on Edwards's prolog to "Damon and Pythias," and suggestive of some of Sidney's later criticism—and criticizes the state of the contemporary drama generally, that of his own country included. The following passage from this document, in which the scholarly Whetstone assails the inconsistencies and irregularities of the English stage, is worth quoting here, as a contemporary critical estimate of the condition of the popular drama:

"The *Englishman* in this quallitie (comedy making) is most vaine, indiscreete, and out of order: he fyrst groundes his worke on impossibilities; then in three howers ronnes he throwe the worlde, marryes, gets Children, makes Children men, men to conquer kingdomes, murder Monsters, and bringeth Gods from Heauen, and fetcheth Diuels from Hel. And (that which is worst) their ground is not so vnperfect as their workinge indiscreete: not waying, so the people laugh, though they laugh them (for theyr follyes), to scorne. Manye tymes (to make mirthe) they make a Clowne companion with a Kinge; in theyr graue Counsels they allow the aduise of fooles; yea, they vse one order of speach for all persons: a grose *Indecorum*, for a Crowe wyll yll counterfet the Nightingale's sweete voice; euen so affected speeche doth misbecome a Clowne. For, to worke a Comedie kindly, graue olde men should instruct, yonge men should showe the imperfections of youth, Strumpets should be lasciuious, Boyes vnhappy, and Clownes should speake disorderlye: entermingling all these actions in such sorte as the graue matter may instruct and the pleasant delight; for without this chaunge the attention would be small, and the likinge lesse."⁹

Whetstone's position, as voiced here, is well illustrative of the distorted ideas of classical notions of dramatic theory then current among many English scholarly playwrights, which disapproved of making a "Clowne companion with a Kinge," and yet did not forbid the union of tragedy, comedy, farce, and other incongruities in the same piece. Both Whetstone and Edwards, for all their scholarly acquaintance with classic drama and vaunted observance of decorum, leaned as much toward the dramatic traditions of the medieval stage. Such

⁹ G. G. Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays* (1904), I, 59-60.

men were instrumental in founding the English national drama; learned playwrights who sought by intermingling the tragic and comic to create a new type of play which would offer a tempered mean between the academic productions, which failed to appeal to popular taste, and the more prevalent forms of medieval extraction, which seldom showed consistent and articulate dramatic structure. To their precept and practise, tragicomedy in England is indebted for its initial exemplification.

While the number of our early so-called tragicomedies is extremely limited, it must be remembered that only a relatively small proportion of the acted drama of this period survives. Moreover, the mingling of kinds was not limited to "tragical comedies"; almost no play of the popular stage is without some mixture of tragic and comic. The medieval custom of inserting disjointed comic material in tragic themes to enliven the action and offset the serious interest, persisted thruout Elizabethan tragedy, and apparently was even associated with critical conceptions of tragicomedy. Such plays as "Horestes" (1567) of John Pickering and "Cambyzes" of Thomas Preston are examples of what may be called "tragi-farce," crude attempts at tragedy interspersed with independent scenes of pure farce. The title of the latter play, which reads, "A Lamentable Tragedie, mixed full of plesant mirth," well describes the ensuing action: two of the eleven scenes into which the piece naturally falls are pure farce, and connected with the serious theme only by the character of the Vice. Such insertions of levity in the body of a play pervade practically all early dramas of a serious cast, whether tragedies, moralities or interludes. Often it is advertised in the title, as in "Cambyzes," or in the "Three Lords and Three Ladies of London" (1590), which is a "Pleasant and Stately Morall . . . Comically interlaced with much honest Mirth"; and not infrequently the propriety of mingling mirth with gravity is defended at some length in the prologs. An early instance of the latter occurs in the interlude of the "Nature of the Four Elements" (c. 1510). The Messenger in the opening speech remarks:

But because some folk be little disposed
 To sadness, but more to mirth and sport,
 This philosophical work is mixed
 With merry conceits, to give men comfort.

The same reason for the mixture of opposites is put forward in the prolog to Upian Fulwell's interlude of "Like Will to Like" (1568):

And because divers men of divers minds be,
 Some do matters of mirth and pastime require:
 Other some are delighted with matters of gravity,
 To please all men, is our author's chief desire.
 Wherefore mirth with measure to sadness is annexed.

Again, "honest mirth" and "godly mirth" are advertised respectively by the prologs of "The Longer thou livest" (c. 1560) and "Marie Magdalene" (1566); while the anonymous interlude of "Jack Juggler" (1553-58) apologizes for its levity by quoting the following advice from "Cato the wise" in regard to mingling mirth and seriousness:

Among thy careful business use sometime mirth and joy,
 That no bodily work thy wits break or 'noy.
 For the mind (saith he), in serious matters occupied,
 If it have not some quiet mirth and recreation
 Interchangeably admixed, must needs be soon wearied,

 Therefore intermix honest mirth in such wise
 That your strength may be refreshed, and to labours suffice.

Similarly comic scenes are admitted in the sombre "Conflict of Conscience," for reasons that the prolog takes care to state:

And though the Historie of it selfe be too too dolorous,
 And would constraine a man with teares of blood his cheekes to wett,
 Yet to refresh the myndes of them that be the Auditors,
 Our Author intermixed hath, in places fitt and meete,
 Some honest mirth, yet alwaies ware Decorvm to exceede.

This whole subject of "decorum," which was made much of by classicists and pseudo-classicists of the day, deserves some attention, as it is involved in various ways with the critical side of tragicomedy. Decorum in the strict classical sense meant the observance of the various canons of ancient dramatic art as set forth by the critics of the later Renaissance,

such as the unities, the rigid severance of dramatic *genres*, the different elements proper to each, and more particularly, it came to denote a certain consistency to type and character—kings should speak and act as befitted their rank, soldiers as befitted theirs, and the same with clowns, bawds, youths, and the like. The main charge brought by scholarly critics against the English national drama, in the relatively few places where they noticed it at all, was its lack of decorum in one or more ways, but particularly in admitting one manner of speech to all classes of characters, and in mingling tragic and comic. Others, however, who also professed allegiance to decorum, apparently gave it a freer interpretation. It is seen above that Woodes conceives of a decorous admixture of mirth in a “dolorous history.” Edwards, it will be remembered, in the prolog to his “tragical comedy,” professes to adhere to the school of Horace, yet claims the right to mix “myrth and care.” Whetstone, for decorum’s sake, divides his “Discourse of Promos and Cassandra” into “two Commedies,” and goes on to show that the Englishman in his play-making is all “out of order” and guilty of various indecorums; yet his own play, in its mixture of tragic and comic, is as flagrant a violation of classical notions of decorum as those of which he accuses his contemporaries. And Gascoigne, while the author of a “tragical comedy,” declares in his “Certain Notes of Instruction” (1575) that “to entermingle merie iests in a serious matter is an *Indecorum*.”¹⁰

It is plain that, whatever may have been the notions of tragedy held by the first English writers of it, the type of play cultivated by Edwards, Gascoigne and Whetstone was not regarded by them as a mingling of kinds liable to the charge of indecorum. It is rather “tragi-farce” and the indiscriminate mixture of mirth in serious matter, so commonly vaunted in the titles and prologs of the more medieval productions, against

¹⁰ G. G. Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essay*, I, 48. Gascoigne repeats the same idea in the text of the *Glass of Government* itself: “let me nowe see who can shewe himselfe the pleasantest Poet in handeling therof, and yet you must also therein obserue *decorum*, for tryfling allegories or pleasant fygures in serious causes are not most comely.” Act III, sc. 3.

which critical utterances like those of Whetstone and Gascoigne are directed. And it is this manner of mingling, but unfortunately under the name of tragicomedy, that, among the other shortcomings of the English stage, meets the scathing denunciation of Sir Philip Sidney in his momentous "Apology for Poetry" (1581):

"But besides these grosse absurdities, how all theyr Playes be neither right Tragedies, nor right Comedies; mingling Kings and Clownes, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in Clownes by head and shoulders, to play a part in maiesticall matters, with neither decencie nor discretion: So as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulnes, is by their mungrell Tragy-comedie obtained. I know *Apuleius* did some-what so, but that is a thing recounted with space of time, not represented in one moment: and I knowe the Auncients haue one or two examples of Tragy-comedies, as *Plautus* hath *Amphitrio*. But, if we marke them well, we shall find, that they neuer, or very daintily, match Horn-pypes and Funeralls. So falleth it out that, hauing indeed no right Comedy, in that comicall part of our Tragedy we haue nothing but scurrility, vnwoorthy of any chaste eares, or some extreame shew of doltishnes, indeed fit to lift vp a loude laughter, and nothing els: where the whole tract of a Comedy shoulde be full of delight, as the Tragedy shoulde be still maintained in a well raised admiration."¹¹

This passage, the most elaborate and important sixteenth century criticism of tragicomedy in England, on examination, seems to be directed not against the "tragical comedies" of the type already considered, but rather against such hybrid productions as "Horestes" and "Cambyses," which were much more open to the charge of the hap-hazard intrusion of clowns and the matching of horn-pipes and funerals.¹² But whatever manner of mingling kinds the critic had in mind, it was "mungrell Tragy-comedie" that was forced to bear the brunt of his scornful denunciation; and it is perhaps for this reason as much as for any other that tragicomedy by name, from this

¹¹ G. G. Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, I, 199.

¹² That Sidney has no quarrel with proper tragicomedy, but even approves it, seems further borne out by a previous passage from the *Apology*. Before examining the various forms of poetry, he notes "that some Poesies haue coupled together two or three kindes, as Tragical and Comical, wher-vpon is risen the Tragi-comicall." And then goes on to add: "But that commeth all to one in this question, for, if seuered they be good, the coniunction cannot be hurtfull." *Ibid.*, I, 175.

time to the end of the century, practically disappears from the public stage in England. Such a far-reaching effect might not be altogether out of proportion to the wide influence that the "Apology" is known to have exerted in scholarly circles for the quarter of a century after it was written. Thruout this period, Sidney is mentioned, quoted and praised in almost every critical work of importance¹³; and while the "Apology" was not printed until 1595, it had circulated in manuscript among the learned of the court for a dozen years before, as evidenced by the critical work both of Puttenham and Harington. It would not be surprising, then, if courtly playwrights, by whom the only preceding tragicomedies had been written, should have discontinued the use of a term that had met the critical obloquy of the chief man of letters of the day.

Sidney's "Apology" is the only one of the numerous Elizabethan critical essays to make any mention of tragicomedy at all. Practically all the dramatic criticism of the period was content to confine its attention to the recognized *genres* of classical tradition; and England, unlike Italy, Spain and France, produced no defender of the national drama. Whether or not Sidney's rebuke to tragicomedy put a temporary end to its active existence under that name, it certainly had little effect in discouraging the practise itself; for, at the time when the "Apology" was penned, the kind of tragicomedy that took its point of departure from "Damon and Pythias" was entering a new period of steady development toward an ultimate type form.

Our knowledge of the English drama of the decade antedating our first great dramatist, John Lyly, is meager; but it is evident that during this period the preëminence on the

¹³ As to his influence in combatting the barbarous state of the English drama, a passage may be quoted from the address to Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke, prefixed by Samuel Daniel to his tragedy of *Cleopatra* (1594):

Now when so many Pennes (like Speares) are charg'd,
To chase away this tyrant of the North;
Grosse Barbarisme, whose powre grown far inlarg'd
Was lately by thy valiant brothers worth
First found, encountred, and prouoked forth.

public stage of plays of everyday life and didactic purpose was waning before the growing popularity of material of a more imaginative and entertaining sort, viz.: that furnished by romance. The romantic element—a convenient term for denoting the unreal and imaginative in literary expression in contradistinction to the familiar and merely commonplace—was to sound the dominant note in the English drama during the last quarter of the sixteenth century. Its rise was largely due to the great influx into England during this time of the romantic tales of the Italian *novellieri*. Beginning with Painter's "Palace of Pleasure" (1566-67), the first English collection of *novelle*, the popularity of the new literary form is attested by the appearance of some eight similar works in less than a quarter of a century following. These collections of popular Italian stories, reenforced by the interminable tales of medieval romance, furnished an inexhaustible storehouse of material to Elizabethan playwrights, which they were not slow to turn to account. Thus may be explained the predominance of the romantic note during this period of the popular drama. Its importance in the development of our subject is evident at once. The ruling spirit of romance is the very essence of tragicomedy. Foreign scenes, strange adventure, heroic exploit, impending danger, love beset with difficulty, idealized women; all are stock romantic elements that offer every opportunity for a blending of tragic and comic. While often purely tragic, the prevalent type of a romantic plot follows rather the mould of tragedy averted: heroes overcome the dangers that confront them, fortune smiles on youth and valor, and the checkered course of romantic love is naturally a tragicomedy.¹⁴ As an influence, then, in the development of intermediate drama,

¹⁴ Cp. the figurative sense in which the word is applied by Nash to Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* in his *Preface* (1591) to the same: "Gentlemen . . . let not your surfeted sight, new come from such puppet play, think scorne to turn aside into this Theater of pleasure, for here you shal find a paper stage streud with pearle, an artificial heau'n to ouershadow the fair frame, & christal wals to encounter your curious eyes, while the tragicommodity of loue is performed by starlight." G. G. Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, II, 223. Cp. also *tragical Comedie* as used by Greene, below, p. 82.

the contribution of romance is quite as important as that coming from the tradition of the medieval stage.

Curiously enough, the romantic note finds its first expression in English drama in the form of an adaptation of the first continental vernacular tragicomedy, the "*Celestina*" (1502).¹⁵ This popular Spanish production is the source of "*Calisto and Melibœa, A new comodye in englysh in maner Of an enterlude,*" which was issued anonymously from the press of John Rastell about 1525, some half century before the romantic note entered England in force. Noticeable at once is the fact that the English adaptor does not take over the *genre* title of the original, probably because he has stripped his source of the features on which its classification of tragicomedy was based. For the English play is only a condensed version of a part of the original, which is further altered for moral purposes by a complete reconstruction of the *dénouement*. A sudden repentance on the part of the heroine forestalls the tragic part of the action, so that the overwhelming catastrophe of the Spanish piece is completely avoided, and the play becomes a moral interlude, closing with a long "exhortacyon to vertew."

On the other hand, the "tragical Comedie of Calistus," which years later called forth the following denunciation from the author of the Puritan tract, "*A second and third blast of of retrait from plaies and Theaters*" (1580),¹⁶ is probably some later version of the same model:

"The nature of these Comedies are, for the most part, after one manner of nature, like the tragical Comedie of Calistus; where the bawdresse Scelestina inflamed the maiden Melibœa with her sorceries."

And it seems to be a literal translation of the original that is licensed to print in an entry on the Stationers' Register, October 6, 1598, as the subtitle closely follows that of the 1501 edition of the Spanish play:¹⁷

¹⁵ Above, p. 45.

¹⁶ Reprinted in the Roxburghe Library, *English Drama and Stage* (1869). The pamphlet has been assigned to Anthony Munday.

¹⁷ *Comedia de Calisto y Melibœa—la qual contiene demas de su agradable y dulce estito muchas sentencias filosofales e avisos mui necessarios para mancebos, mostrandoles los enganos que estan encerrados en siruientes y alcahuetas.* Seville ed., 1501 and later.

"Entred . . . a booke intituled The tragicke Comedye of Celestina, wherein are discoursed in most pleasant stile manye Philosophicall sentences and advertisementes verye necessarye for younge gentlemen Discoueringe the sleighes of treacherous seruantes and the subtile cariages of filthye bawdes."¹⁸

From "Calisto and Melibœa" there is a long interval of some thirty to forty years before the romantic element reappears in the English vernacular drama; and it is chiefly in the early tragicomedies that it finds its next expression. Edwards's "Damon and Pythias," his lost "Palamon and Arcyte," Bower's "Appius and Virginia," unmistakably hark back to classical or medieval romance; while the plots of Whetstone's "Promos and Cassandra" and Wilmot's tragedy of "Tancred and Gismunda," find a source in the romantic stories of Italian novel. The close connexion that plays of romantic theme bear to tragicomedy continues to be evident in the few extant specimens of the less known predecessors of the romantic drama. "Common Conditions" (1570-76) and "Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes" (1570-84) are two dramatized romances of this sort, which display thruout the element of impending but finally averted tragedy in the dangers and difficulties, fighting and rescues that befall the fortunes of amorous knights and distressed ladies before they are conducted to a propitious close. And the sole surviving court entertainment of the period, the "Rare Triumphs of Love and Fortune" (c. 1582), likewise presents a romantic love theme involving the usual element of distress and difficulty. It is an obvious reference to plays of this sort that occurs in Gosson's "Playes Confuted in fūe Actions" (1582):

"Sometime you shall see nothing but the aduentures of an amorous knight, passing from cōtrie to cōtrie for the loue of his lady, encountering many a terrible monster made of broune paper, & at his retorne, is so wonderfully changed, that he can not be knowne but by some posie in his tablet, or by a broken ring, or a handkircher, or a piece of a cockle shell, what learne you by that?"¹⁹

¹⁸ A previous entry in the *Stationers' Register*, Feb. 24, 1591, of "A booke intituled Lacelestina Comedia in Spanishe," further attests the wide popularity of this well known production in England as elsewhere. For the influence of the *Celestina* in England, see A. S. W. Rosenbach, *Shakspeare Jahrbuch* (1903), XXXIX, 43 ff.

¹⁹ Roxburghe Library, *English Drama and Stage* (1869), p. 181.

Some further idea of the vogue of the drama of romance during these years, and the material upon which it was founded, is furnished by the titles of non-extant plays. Out of a list of over sixty productions mentioned in the "Minutes of the Revels at Court" as acted between 1571 and 1584, some fifteen or twenty, judged by their titles, were surely dramatized romances. Certainly such names as "Paris and Vienna," "Cloridon and Radiamanta," "Predor & Lucia," "Herpetulus, the blew knichte," "the Solitarie Knight," "the Knight in the Burnyng Rock," "Philemon & philecia," "Percius & Anthomiris," "three Systers of Mantua," "Duke of Millayn and the Marques of Mantua," "Portio and Demorantes," "Phillyda & Choryn," "Felix & Philomena," are redolent of romance, both medieval and Italian. Many of these, it is safe to assume, must have been tragicomedies—whether by name or not—of the type of the averted tragedy. This, at least, may be said with assurance of "Paris and Vienna," if it followed—as it certainly did—the medieval romance of that name published by Caxton in 1485.

At all events, it is plain that the romantic element, which came to predominate in the English drama by 1580, is so closely associated with the basic principle of tragicomedy that the future preparation for the form is to be sought in the course traced by this type of material. The indiscriminate mingling of tragic and comic, characteristic of other forms of the popular drama, becomes now a matter of secondary importance in the development of the subject beside the more unified blending of the two elements furnished by the drama of romance. From 1580 to the close of the century the mixed drama of the latter kind is chiefly exemplified in the work of Lyly, Greene, and lastly Shakspeare.

From the little that may be ascertained of the dramatic creed of John Lyly, it seems that he occupies a medial place—not unlike his best predecessors, Edwards and Whetstone—between the classical and the popular schools. Neither in precept nor practise does he endorse the rigid severance of tragedy and comedy that Sidney and other classicists of the time were enjoining, nor does he follow the careless jumbling

of species of most of his forebears. If he is not wholly in sympathy with the excessive freedom of the English popular stage, he turns it to good account in his own practise by mingling all possible elements of the contemporary drama—history, myth, farce, comedy, tragedy, pastoral—and yet with such skill that the mixture is not incongruous. Doubtless no one dramatic form could please the cosmopolitan taste of his Elizabethan audience, and hence he blended all. “At our exercises,” he declares in the prolog to “Midas” (1589), “Souldiers call for Tragedies, their obiect is bloud: Courtiers for Commedies, their subiect is loue; Countriemen for Pastoralles, Shepheards are their Saintes. . . . If wee present a mingle-mangle, our fault is to be excused, because the whole worlde is become an Hodge-podge.” The prolog to “Endimion” (1585) likewise waives all claim to dramatic regularity: “Wee present neither Comedie, nor Tragedie, nor storie, nor anie thing, but that whosoeuer heareth may say this, Why heere is a tale of the Man in the Moone.” And in the “Prolog at the Black Friers” of “Alexander and Campaspe” (1580) occurs an echo of the morality custom of defending the insertion of mirth in serious matter: “We haue mixed mirth with counsell, and discipline with delight, thinking it not amisse in the same garden to sowe pot-herbes, that we set flowers.”

So much for Lyly's confessed irregularity as a playwright. With all the versatility that characterizes his art, it is noticeable that he studiously refrains from touching on a tragic theme. Yet, amid all the allegory, myth, pastoral and romance with which he deals, some intrusion of tragic matter is unavoidable. In “Endimion,” “Midas,” “Gallathea” and “Love's Metamorphoses,” the lightness of pure comedy is considerably tempered with serious incident and situation, so that the action at times approaches the gravity of real tragedy.²⁰ But of these plays, none sufficiently approaches the cast of tragicomedy to

²⁰ For example, Endimion condemned to “sleep out his youth and flowering time,” and the changing of Bogoa into a tree; Hæbe condemned to be sacrificed in *Gallathea*; Midas' danger of starvation by the golden gift; and the slaughter of Fidelia and the wasting of Erisichthon by famine in *Love's Metamorphoses*. Cp. Bond, *John Lyly* (1902), II, 261.

deserve more than passing notice as contributing to the development of the form. A more historical interest, at any rate, is furnished by "Alexander and Campaspe," which, while first printed as a "Comedie" in 1584, in the second quarto of 1591 is given the distinctive title of "tragicall Comedie"²¹ the first known instance of a reappearance of the term in the drama since the "Glass of Government" sixteen years before. This play, while admitting no situations tragic in themselves, is pervaded thruout with a general atmosphere of seriousness, which must have given rise to the mixed title; the tragic interest consisting in the uncertain fate hanging over the fortunes of the two lovers, Appeles and Campaspe, which at the end is unexpectedly given a propitious outcome by Alexander's renunciation of his love in favor of his humble rival. There is no evidence to show that Lyly himself ever conceived of this play—or of any of his others—as a tragicomedy; and, moreover, about the time the second quarto of "Alexander and Campaspe" appeared, Lyly's active dramatic career was ending. It forms, however, the one link connecting his work to professed tragicomedy. His contribution otherwise to the development of the form, while not considerable, is important historically in the impetus that his example gave to the vogue of the romantic drama.

Savoring less of the court, and more broadly expressive of the distinct national qualities of the popular stage, are the plays of Robert Greene, which form the next step in the advancement of our subject. (Greene's plays, in one way or another, are all illustrative of the mingling of tragic and comic so characteristic of heroic and sentimental romance. Broadly generalized, they may be said to represent a tempered mean between Marlowesque tragedy on the one hand, and Lyllyan comedy on the other. None reaches the height of actual tragedy, yet none is devoid of a distinct tragic impulse. And in theory as well as practise, as will be shown later, the author appears to consider the mingling of tones the working prin-

²¹ The play was similarly entitled in Blount's 1632 edition of *Six Court Comedies*, and so classified generally thruout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

ciple of all art. For these reasons, Greene's contribution to tragicomedy is the most important that the form receives before the seventeenth century, as a cursory examination of his plays will show.

Even the romantic comedies, "The Honourable Historie of frier Bacon, and frier Bongay" (c. 1589) and "A Pleasant conceyted Comedie of George a Greene, the Pinner of Wakefield" (1588-92), are not without a certain definite tragic admixture. Both plays admit violent deaths; but in both cases the tragic overtakes subordinate characters, and is of no particular notice, neither playing any part in the main action nor serving any purpose in sustaining the plot.²² On the other hand, the extravagant romances of "The Comicall Historie of Alphonsus, King of Aragon" (c. 1589) and "The Historie of Orlando Furioso" (c. 1591) are suffused with tragic action, and yet end happily for their heroic protagonists. The character of Alphonsus is a crude imitation of the Marlowesque type of conquering hero, whose course is left besmeared with blood; while Orlando is a knight of chivalric romance, who kills his rivals, goes mad, tears a shepherd to pieces, and performs other deeds of violence. Both present the machinery and spectacular horrors of a popular tragedy of blood; yet the conquering successes of the heroes are unbroken by catastrophe, their fortunes are brought to a propitious close, and the final wind-up of their stormy careers is a marriage and reconciliation.²³ With the "Looking Glasse for London and England" (1594), the peculiar production that Greene wrote in conjunction with Lodge, we return to a medley of the later morality type, whose chief claim to our attention is due to the

²² In *Frier Bacon*, the double tragedy overtaking the two young scholars, who kill each other after beholding in Bacon's magic glass the death of their fathers; and in *George a Greene*, the killing of Sir Gilbert Armstrong by the hero.

²³ While both plays were printed as *Historics*, there is record in Dresden, July 9, 1626, of the performance of an English play called a *Tragicomædia von einem König in Arragona*, which is probably to be identified with Greene's *Comicall History* on the same subject. See Creizenach, *Die Schauspiele der englischen Komödianten* (*Deutsche National-Litteratur*, 1889, XXIII), p. xxxv.

fact that the manuscript title page of a contemporary quarto edition styles the play "Tr. Com.," an evident abbreviation for "Tragical Comedy."²⁴ The play is an exposition of the prevalent vices of London and their tragic consequences, represented thru the mirror of the story of Nineveh and the life of its wicked king Rasni. Moral exhortations to repentance, delivered thruout by the prophet Oseas, are unavailing; until finally, Jonah appears—cast out of a whale upon the stage—who issues a warning to the inhabitants that prevails, and then is the conversion and repentance of Nineveh brought about. As the play thus roughly fits into the mould of the medieval play of serious theme and moral triumph, its chance classification as a tragicomedy must be accounted for in that way. So considered, it belongs with "Appius and Virginia" and the "Glass of Government."

But by far Greene's most notable connexion with tragicomedy is furnished by "The Scottish Historie of Iames the fourth" (1598), a play which lacks only the *genre* name to be the most important landmark in the whole formative period of English tragicomedy. In other respects, it occupies a position quite analogous to that of the "Bradamante" in France. Far from being a history at all, the play offers a sentimental tale of romantic love, borrowed from Giraldi's "Hecatomithi," and adapted to a pseudo-historical setting. As an interesting sidelight on comparative tragicomedy, it is worth while to notice that Giraldi himself dramatized the same romance in his "Arrenopia" (1553), one of his confessed tragedies *di licito fin*.²⁵ While differing considerably in treatment, the two plays present the same tragicomic plot, which in the English version, briefly outlined, is this: King James of

²⁴ A

Looking Glasse for London and England
Tr. Com.

Geo. . . . By . . . Smythers
Thos Lodge and Robert Green
1598

See J. C. Collins's *Greene*, I, 142.

²⁵ Above, p. 30. The relation of the two plays is pointed out by Creizenach, *Anglia* (1885), VIII, 419.

Scotland, cherishing an unrighteous passion for Ida, the daughter of the Countess of Arran, thinks to obtain her by ridding himself of his own wife, the Queen Dorothea. An attempt is made to murder Dorothea by the king's hired assassin Jacques, who—it is supposed—accomplishes his purpose. To avenge her dishonor, the King of England and the revolting Scottish peers declare war on James; but the battle is averted by the timely appearance of the supposedly murdered queen, who, by her intervention, brings about a reconciliation, forgives her repentant husband—who meanwhile has been thwarted in his designs on Ida by her marriage with another—and is happily restored to her throne. Here the tragic interest, instead of being confined to an isolated scene of secondary concern, as in "Friar Bacon" and "George a Greene," or taking the form of a series of slaughters, as in "Alphonsus" and "Orlando Furioso," is interwoven with the main plot, and, moreover, is happily averted in the end. The result is a perfected form of tragicomedy not again equalled until the time of Beaumont and Fletcher.^{25a}

As a playwright, Greene, unlike his chief predecessors, wrote without any well defined precepts of his art, as his freedom and originality of treatment well attest. Yet from his practise may be deduced at least two general principles that appear to form his working basis: first, the happy ending, whatever the theme; and second, a tragic interest in every play. And in these two respects he is consistent in his prose romances as well, where, moreover, he again and again expresses the general idea, both in prefatory matter and text, that tragedy and comedy should go hand in hand.²⁶ Yet in

^{25a} As tragicomedies Shakspeare's early plays all fall short of *James IV*. See below, p. 87.

²⁶ Some examples are: "So (right Honorable) I haue mixed melancholie with Musicke, and tempered the brawles of the Planets with pleasaunt though tragical histories." *Epistle to Planetomachia* (1585), Grosart's *Greene*, V, 7-8; "Remaining thus quiet, though not satisfied, fortune willing after so sharpe a Catastrophe, to induce a comicall conclusion, tempered hir storme with this pleasant calme." *Perymedes* (1588), *Ibid.*, VII, 51; "Fortune who had wrought this tragedie, intending to shewe that her frunt is as full of fauours as of frownes; and that shee

spite of these noticeable traits both of practise and theory, it is doubtful if Greene had any conception of tragicomedy as a dramatic species. Even the terms tragedy and comedy he steadily avoids using to denote his unaided plays; all are "histories." And in his prose romances, his use of the two terms is frequently indicative that he attached pretty loose ideas to them. For example, in one place, the happy discovery that two combatants are father and son he calls a "straunge Tragedie";²⁷ on the other hand, the disclosure that Pandosto was lusting after his own daughter is described as a "comickall euent,"²⁸ and much the same chaotic notion of the word is implied by the title of "Comickall History," which adorns the "Alphonsus." A similar looseness of meaning characterizes the sole instance in all Greene's work in which the term "tragical comedy" appears, as we find it used figuratively in the following passage from the "Carde of Fancie" (1587):

"*Melitta* seeing y^e Cupid began to fauour the cause of his clients, in giuing them such fit opportunitie to discouer their cares, went her waie, leauing *Gwydonius* the first man to plaie his part in this tragical Comedie, who seeing his goddesse thus surprised with sicknesse, was so galled with grieffe, etc."²⁹

The expression as employed here evidently has reference to the plot of the romance, which is only a harmless love difficulty;³⁰ yet the passage is interesting as showing that Greene was certainly acquainted with the "tragical comedies" of his predecessors, if he did not adopt the innovation in his own dramatic nomenclature.³¹

holdes a dimple in her checke, as she hath a wrinkle in her brow, began thus in a Comickall vaine to bee pleasant." *Greenes Neuer too Late* (1590), *Ibid.*, VIII, 60; "*Pandosto* . . . moued with these desperate thoughts, he fell into a melancholie fit, and to close vp the Comedie with a Tragickall stratageme, he slewe himselfe." *Pandosto* (1588), *Ibid.*, IV, 317.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, IV, 192.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 317.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, IV, 98.

³⁰ Compare the figurative use of the word by Nash, above, p. 73. n. 14.

³¹ The same can be said of the dramatist Thomas Kyd, if indeed the authorship of the tragedy of *Soliman and Perseda* (1588) is correctly assigned to him. In Act V, sc. 2, of that play occurs the following figurative use of the *genre* name:

As previously noticed, Greene's unaided plays all bear the popular title of "history," a term usually only implying that the subject matter was some sort of narrative. This convenient and indefinite term seems to have had a great vogue at this period of the drama as the proper designation for all sorts of popular plays. Of the fifty-three non-extant plays entered in the "Minutes of the Court Revels" between 1576 and 1584, twenty-nine are "histories." Further evidence of the prevalence of this title, beside giving an interesting hint of the irregular character of such plays, is furnished by a dialog from the contemporary "First Fruits" (1578) of John Florio:

"G. After dinner we will go see a play.

H. The plays that they play in England are not right comedies.

T. Yet they do nothing else but play every day.

H. Yea, but they are neither right comedies nor right tragedies.

G. How would you name them then?

H. Representations of histories without any decorum."³²

Even the classical critic, William Webbe, in his "Discourse of English Poetry" (1586), appears to recognize plays of this name as deserving a place with comedy and tragedy:

"Though there be many sortes of poetically writings, and Poetry is not debarred from any matter . . . yet . . . I may comprehend the same in three sortes, which are Comicall, Tragicall, Historiall."³³

It is obvious that the broad use of "history" to denote plays of no relation to the chronicles arose from the need of classifying the great mass of irregular productions that were neither right tragedies on the one hand, nor right comedies on the other, just as similar circumstances in Spain about the same time were giving rise to the adoption of the term *comedia* as a common classification for all plays of the national drama.³⁴

Sol. Heere ends my deere *Erastus* tragedie,
And now begins my pleasant Comedie;
But if *Perseda* vnderstand these newes,
Our seane will prooue but tragicomicall.

³² Collier, II, 426. n.

³³ G. G. Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, I, 249.

³⁴ It may be recalled here that some of the early neo-Latin plays were classified as tragicomedies because they were "histories." Above, pp.

If Greene's plays may be taken as representative of the non-extant mass of "histories" of the time, it is evident that the term was frequently only a more popular name for romantic tragicomedy.

It has been seen that Greene's treatment of romance material, whether as drama or novel, all betrays a more or less conscious mingling of tragic and comic, and that in one play, "James IV," the two motives are combined in a way anticipatory of the later developed form of tragicomedy. Before considering the final contribution of romance to the preparation of the subject in the romantic comedies of Shakspeare at the close of the century, we may first glance at a few anomalous plays of the same period that deserve some attention as intermediate drama of like character, all of which are of uncertain date and most of uncertain authorship.

Chief among plays of this group is the long popular and much discussed "Mucedorus," a professed comedy, but presenting all sorts of romantic adventures of tragicomic cast and even admitting death. A distressed princess is first beset by a bear and next by a wildman; the hero, a disguised prince, slays both and also a would-be assassin; and after such trials the two are happily joined. Far more somber in tone and incident, yet short of Marlowesque tragedy, is the crude and uncertain production printed by Bullen as "The Distracted Emperor," which turns to medieval romance—Charlemagne and his peers—for its theme.³⁵ Dekker's "Old Fortunatus" is yet different. It offers a tragic theme from romantic folklore, intermingled with a profusion of comedy and masque elements, and echoes the old morality idea of tragicomedy in crowning the calamitous end of its heroes with a moral triumph. Of all such plays, however, perhaps in the "Weakest goeth to the Wall" romance most nearly approximates a tragicomic resultant. Here a romantic plot is adapted to a pseudo-historical setting, and given the treatment of a chron-

21, 25. For general subject of the use of the term "history" as a word of dramatic nomenclature, cp. Creizenach, *Geschichte*, IV (pt. 1.), 268 ff.

³⁵ *Old Plays*, Vol. 3. Bullen entitles the play a *Tragi-Comedy*; there is no documentary support for this.

icle history. The story centers on the career of a foundling son of an exiled Duke, who, after undergoing various romantic adventures in love and war, is about to be executed for a supposed violation of the law of the land, when a timely discovery of his true lineage brings all to rights, and a combination of events renders the *dénouement* happy for all. As a rule, tho, these anomalous forms play little part in the growth of tragicomedy. It is in Shakspeare's early plays that the blending of tragic and comic in romance receives its consummating touch. With them the romantic element ceases to be the predominating note in the English drama; and, accordingly, with them ends that development of tragicomedy that is identified with the course of romance.

The early Shaksperian plays that deserve some mention in a treatment of the beginnings of English tragicomedy may properly be restricted to the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," "Merchant of Venice" and "Much Ado," altho the romantic comedies of "As You Like It" and "Twelfth Night" are not without the somber touches that must accompany the brightest of such plays.³⁶ Indeed, the border line between tragicomedy and romantic comedy in Shaksperian drama is at best an arbitrary one. Both forms employ the same materials and turn on the same situations; their differences are in degree and not in kind. When the element of impending disaster, the invariable accompaniment of stories of romantic love, is turned to the darker purposes of tragedy, then romantic comedy may be said to stiffen into the cast of its stancher sister.³⁷

Thus the sustaining serious element in the "Two Gentlemen

³⁶ In this connexion it seems significant to note that even in the *Comedy of Errors* Shakspeare evidently felt it necessary to envelop the plot with a serious interest, altho that play is distinctly without our scope.

³⁷ The distinction between romantic comedy and tragicomedy may be admirably brought out by a comparison of Shakspeare's *Much Ado* with a later anonymous play on the same plot, entitled *The Partial Law* (c. 1615-30). The latter is simply an elaboration of the traduced lady theme, stripped of the comic sub-plot, and heightened and intensified to fit the mould of conventional tragicomic drama. For this recently recovered play, see *Appendix*.

of Verona," in the events that lead up to the threatened wholesale catastrophe in the last scene, pitches the tone of the play considerably above that of pure romantic comedy; while the means employed to relieve the final situation—an absurd conversion of character and a revelation of identity—are stock devices of later tragicomedy. Similar statements may be made for the "Merchant of Venice" and "Much Ado," both of which follow much the same general outline. Both are stories of youthful romance and humorous characters; both admit a dark and sinister sub-plot skillfully interwoven with the main theme; and in both the happy ending completely submerges the serious part of the action. The consummate skill with which Shakspeare has combined the two contrary elements is particularly noticeable in the "Merchant of Venice." Here we have two actions, that of the caskets and that of the pound of flesh, the gay and the serious, working one into the other easily and naturally, and both reaching their culmination in the fourth act; and then, after the strained suspense of the trial scene, the triumph of generosity and romantic love completely obliterates the memory of the threatened danger. In "Much Ado," the comic main plot, the story of Benedict and Beatrice, is sustained and braced by the sinister tale of the plottings of Don Juan against the fair name of the lady Hero. Again the mirthful and the serious are ingeniously united. The essentially comic scene of Dogberry and his associates is made the direct means, thru the device of overheard conversation, of averting in the end the impending disaster; and later the two plots are skillfully tied where the tragic accusation scene is made the means of uniting Beatrice and Benedict. In both plays the pervading spirit of comedy is such as to forecast the character of the *dénouement*. Even the momentary suspense aroused by the trial scene in the "Merchant of Venice" is hardly sufficient to raise any doubt in the mind of the spectator as to how the balance will incline; and, moreover, it is doubtful if the Shylock of the Elizabethan stage was the tragic figure of modern interpretation. Certainly in "Much Ado" the happy outcome is never in question; for immediately after the villainy of Don Juan is perpetrated, it is discovered

by the watch, and from that time its ultimate overthrow is felt to be assured.

Thus, while the tone of pure comedy is too dominant in these plays to entitle them to the same importance in the preparation for tragicomedy as "James IV," they serve to show the artistic height to which the interweaving of tragic and comic material had developed by the close of the century; and in this respect they prepare the way for the perfected form of tragicomedy that was to emerge later with the revival of romantic drama in the work of Beaumont and Fletcher.

But to return for a moment to the non-romantic drama during the period just reviewed, we find that, apart from romance, in other forms of the national drama as well, the popular mixture of kinds is equally evident, altho contributing little to the formation of later tragicomedy. The English chronicle plays especially perpetuated the mingling of kinds inherited from medieval practise. In the old play of "King Leir," we have the same events of Shakspeare's great tragedy deprived of their inevitable outcome, and treated in accord with poetic justice. Leir is restored to his throne, a like propitious fate accorded Cordelia and her husband, while defeat and exile are the rewards of the wicked daughters.³⁸ On the other hand, the juxtaposition of tragic and comic is characteristic of almost all historical plays of the period. The biographical dramas of "Jack Straw" and "Sir Thomas More" are hodge-podges of tragedy and low comedy. The same is true of "A Larum for London," a chronicle treatment of the late sack of Antwerp by the Spaniards; and in the realm of mythological history, Robert Armin's "Valiant Welshman" not only jumbles tragedy and farce, but, like Greene's "Alphonsus," ends happily for its Marlowesque protagonist. Again, the serious portions of "The Troublesome Raigne," "The Famous Victories," Peele's "Edward I" and the "Tragedy of Woodstock," are all interlarded with comic relief, much of which is destitute of humor and full of grossness; while some-

³⁸ In this connexion may be mentioned the old play of *Timon* (c. 1600), which offers a similar departure from the tragic treatment later accorded it by Shakspeare.

thing similar is supplied by the Jack Cade scenes in "Henry VI." But in Shakspeare's trilogy of "Henry IV" and "Henry V" the comic admixture reaches a height that clearly justifies its existence. In these plays the immortal Falstaff comedy, which is interspersed at intervals thruout the serious narrative, becomes almost as conspicuous as the history itself, and was probably intended to prove quite as attractive, if we judge from the titles of the early quartos. "With the humorous conceits of Sir John Falstaffe" reads the title page of the earliest edition of "Henry IV," and "Together with ancient Pistol" is the sub-heading of the first "Henry V" quarto. From this it appears that comedy held much the same expected and recognized place in chronicle history as that accorded "mirth" in the moralities and interludes.

But of more historical interest to the subject are the two plays of the contemporary non-romantic drama known to bear the title of tragicomedy. The first of these is the well-known Latin college play, the Oxford "Bellum Grammaticale," which we find praised by Sir John Harington in 1591 and chronicled as acted before the Queen at Christ Church on September 24 of the following year.³⁹ It is supposedly the work of the Oxford theologian, Leonard Hutten, about 1590; but far from being an original composition, it is only one of many versions of Andrea Guarnas's "Bellum Grammaticale," a popular school drama which appeared at Cremona in 1511, and in two centuries gave rise to upward of a hundred editions and revisions thruout western Europe.⁴⁰ The unique character of the piece definitely sets it apart from the other neo-Latin tragicomedies; and, moreover, the title distinction seems to be the innovation of the Oxford redactor. The prolog speaker announces:

"We will give you a *Tragico-comadia*, . . . not one which may draw forth tears, but rather excite laughter. For I am permitted to be the messenger of a sad and mournful war, in which *Poeta* and *Amo*, seditious

³⁹ Not printed until 1635. See below, p. 145, n. 31.

⁴⁰ For a full account of the history of this interesting play, see Johannes Bolte, *Andrea Guarnas Bellum Grammaticale und Seine Nachahmungen*, Berlin, 1908.

chiefs, grievously disturb the most flowering province of Grammar, not without the lamentable overthrow of the bravest Verbs and Nouns."⁴¹

The ensuing conflict is grievous indeed for the contending forces. Nouns are deprived of cases, numbers, and the like, and Verbs suffer similar losses, by all of which the author ingeniously accounts for the present irregularities of Latin Grammar. It is easy to see how the allegorical and mock nature of the conflict might have suggested the mixed title to the Oxford redactor, whose familiarity with the name may be traced to earlier humanistic example. At all events, tragicomedy appears to have been a comfortable denomination for the curious piece that later English versions chose to retain.⁴²

Our second tragicomedy is likewise an academic play and almost equally anomalous—the odd production printed in 1598 as “The Tragicoœdi of the vertuous Octavia. Done by Samuel Brandon.” As the author was a classicist of the later school of Samuel Daniel, Fulke Greville, Sir William Alexander and the Countess of Pembroke—all of whom came under the influence of Garnier, the famous contemporary tragic writer in France, and attempted to revive Senecan tragedy in England as he had done abroad—it is strange that he should have attempted a professed tragicomedy, a form in almost universal ill-repute among men of his class. The piece in the main conforms to the rules of classic dramatic art: the scene is confined to Rome, a Senecan chorus is introduced, and the interest centers about the character of Antony’s virtuous wife Octavia, deserted by her husband for Cleopatra. As the absent Antony nowhere appears on the scene, his defeat and death, which are reported, can hardly constitute a catastrophe for the play. The virtuous Octavia, on the other hand, with whom

⁴¹ *Tragico-comœdiam*

Vobis dabimus, nobis si aures et oculos dare est otium,
Non quæ lacrimas exprimat, sed risum moveat.
Nam belli funesti et luctuosi sim licet nuntius,
Quo florentissimam Grammaticæ provinciam misere
Vexarunt Poeta et Amo, seditiosi principes,
Non sine lamentabili strage fortissimorum Verborum et Nominum.

Ibid., p. 106.

⁴² See below, p. 178, note 50.

the main interest has to do, survives her misfortunes and is left alive at the end. Thus the play has something of the two-fold ending of the morality type, which is the only possible excuse for its classification as a tragicomedy. As there is no evidence that the play was ever performed, its influence in popularizing the *genre* name on the public stage is of course negligible.

Reference has been made to the popular custom of enlivening tragic themes with comic by-play, a custom which persisted thruout the formative period of English tragedy in defiance of decorum, and which seems to have been the "munnegrell Tragy-comedie" so bitterly assailed by Sidney. Even in addition to the comic scenes printed in the text of such plays, improvised clownage and jigs between the acts of tragedies formed a common and expected part of the performance;⁴³ but toward the end of the sixteenth century there is evidence of a growing appreciation of the unseemliness of such practise. The printer of the 1592 edition of Marlowe's "Tamburlaine" takes pains to say that he has purposely omitted from the text certain "fond and friuolous Jestures," which to him seem a "disgrace to so honorable and stately a historie";⁴⁴ while the point of view of Sidney and Whetstone in regard to the buffoon in tragedy is repeated in the following satiric thrust of Bishop Hall:

Now, lest such frightful shows of Fortune's fall,
And bloody tyrant's rage, should chance apall
The dead-struck audience, 'midst the silent rout,
Comes leaping in a self-misformed lout,
And laughs, and grins, and frames his mimic face,
And justles straight into the prince's place:
Then doth the theatre echo all aloud,

⁴³ Cp. Hamlet's advice to the players, where he urges that clowns be allowed to "speak no more than is set down for them." The same custom seems to have prevailed on the popular French stage as well, as the following passage from J. Bodin's *Six Bookes of a Commonweale* (1576-78) indicates: "Now adayes they put at the end of euerie Tragedie (as poyson into meat) a comedie or jigge." Translation of Richard Knolles (1606), Lib. I, cap. 1.

⁴⁴ *To the Gentlemen Readers: And Others that take Pleasure in Reading Histories.* R. I. Printer.

With gladsome noise of that applauding crowd.
 A goodly hotch-potch! when vile russetings
 Are match'd with monarchs, and with mighty kings.
 A goodly grace to sober tragic Muse,
 When each base clown his clumsy fist doth bruise,
 And show his teeth in double rotten row
 For laughter at his self-resembled show.⁴⁵

While instances of this sort may be cited to show the critical feeling on the part of some toward the mingling of tragic and comic, nowhere in all the dramatic comment of the century, with the exception of Sidney's "Apology," is there any mention of the practise as tragicomedy, or any indication at all of a critical recognition of any such dramatic species. Even in all the dramatic criticism of Ben Jonson that finds its way into his early plays, there appears to be no passage that would seem to indicate that he had so-called tragicomedy in mind.⁴⁶ These facts of criticism, coupled with the practical absence of the title term from popular plays of the last quarter of the century, are fairly convincing of the almost negligible vogue of tragicomedy as a recognized dramatic species in sixteenth

⁴⁵ *Satires* (1597), I, 3. With this may be mentioned a similar reference that finds expression in the academic Cambridge production, *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* (c. 1598-99):

"Enter Dromo, drawing a clowne in with a rope.

"Clowne. What now? thrust a man into the commonwealth whether hee will or noe? what the devill should I doe here?

"Dromo. Why, what an ass art thou! dost thou not knowe a playe cannot be without a clowne? Clownes have bene thrust into playes by head and shoulders ever since Kempe could make a scurvey face; and therefore reason thou shouldst be drawne in with a cart-rope." Act V, l. 671 ff. (Ed. W. D. Macray, 1886.)

⁴⁶ One passage, however, in the dramatic comment of Cordatus and Mitis, which accompanies the action of *Every Man Out of His Humour* (1599), may be cited as illustrating Jonson's attitude toward the introduction of tragic situations in a comedy. The passage in question is called forth by the scene (Act III, sc. 2) where Sordido is barely saved from his attempt at suicide. Mitis objects to this approach to tragedy as out of keeping with the nature of comedy, but withdraws his objection when Cordatus cites a precedent from the *Cistellania* of Plautus. Cp. also the close of the preceding scene, which seems to allude to the absurdities of current romantic comedy. For Jonson's later connexion with the name tragicomedy, see below, p. 109.

century England. Moreover, from the scanty extant data dealing directly with tragicomedy, it is equally evident that the title name connoted no very definite, and certainly no uniform ideas even on the part of the few who used it. So far as these aspects of the subject are concerned, the situation may be more clearly grasped from a summarizing tabulation of all the known instances of any use of the term tragicomedy in England before 1600:

Drama

I. Academic plays:

(1) Neo-Latin,

Comædia Tragica, "Christus Redivivus" (1543),
Nicholas Grimald.⁴⁷

Drama Comicotragicum, "Sapientia Solomonis" (undated MS. Acted 1566?), Anon. redaction.⁴⁸

Tragico-comædia, "Bellum Grammaticale" (c. 1590),
Leonard Hutten (?), From prolog of MS.⁴⁹

(2) Vernacular,

tragicall Comedie, "Glass of Government" (1575),
George Gascoigne.⁵⁰

Tragi-comædi, "Virtuous Octavia" (1598), Samuel
Brandon.⁵¹

II. Popular plays:

tragicall commedie, "Damon and Pythias" (1571), Rich-
ard Edwards.⁵²

Tragicall Comedie, "Appius and Virginia" (1575),
R(ichard) B(ower).⁵³

tragicall Comedie, "Alexander and Campaspe" (1591,
second quarto), John Lyly.⁵⁴

Tr. Com. (Tragical Comedy), "A Looking Glass for Lon-
don and England" (1598 quarto, ms. title page),
Thomas Lodge and Robert Greene.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Above, p. 23.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Non-Dramatic

I. Dramatic reference:

tragical Comedie of Calistus, "A second and third blast of retrait" (1580), Anon.⁵⁶

Tragy-comedie and *Tragi-comicall*, "Apology for Poetry" (1595), Sir Philip Sidney.⁵⁷

tragicke Comedye of Ccelestina, "Stationers' Register" (1598).⁵⁸

II. Figurative use:

tragicommodity, Preface (1591) to Sidney's "Astrophel and Stella," Thomas Nash.⁵⁹

tragical Comedie, "Carde of Fancie" (1587), Robert Greene.⁶⁰

tragicomicall, "Soliman and Perseda" (1588), Thomas Kyd(?).⁶¹

From the above data, the limited extent to which tragicomedy was known and cultivated as such in the period under consideration, as well as the little uniformity in the ideas associated with the name, are readily apparent. During a period of over half a century, covering the formative era of the English national drama, only nine plays have survived as tragicomedies by direct contemporary evidence. These may be broadly grouped as academic or popular productions; but beyond some such general division, classification is well nigh impossible, as they range all the way from neo-Latin miracle, school drama and classical imitation to popular romantic play and belated morality. Moreover, in three only—"Christus Redivivus," "Damon and Pythias" and the "Glass of Government"—is there any explanation offered by the authors for the adoption of the title term; in two others at least—"Alexander and Campaspe" and the "Looking Glass"—the later addition of the *genre* name points to the printer rather than to the author; and of course the redacted "Sapientia Solomonis" and the lost "Celestina" adaptations or translations take over their classification from the continental originals. While dif-

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 73 n.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82, note 31.

fering widely in almost every respect, all in common mingle the motives of tragedy and comedy, and in this regard—with the possible exception of “*Bellum Grammaticale*”—may be broadly classified as preferring one of two forms: They either follow the tradition of the medieval stage with its triumphant spiritual *dénouement* and its double catastrophe for the good and the evil, as illustrated in “*Christus Redivivus*” and the “*Glass of Government*;” or they conform to the conventional type of popular romance, wherein the course of idealized friendship or romantic love is conducted thru danger and distress to safety and happiness, as shown in “*Damon and Pythias*” and “*Alexander and Campaspe*.”

Altho all our extant tragicomedies listed above may be made to fit roughly into one or the other of these moulds, it is obvious that the early conception of the form in England, as elsewhere, cannot be strictly confined even within these limits. According to Sidney, the “*Tragi-comicall*” arose from a coupling of the “*Tragicall and Comicall*”⁶²—apparently the only requirement necessary for the product; the manner of mixture being an individual matter in each case. At all events, only this broad basic conception of the form will fit alike the explanations of tragicomedy offered by Grimald, Edwards and Gascoigne, the “*mungrell Tragy-comedie*” described in the “*Apology*,” and the figurative sense in which the expression is used by Nash, Greene, and the author of “*Soliman and Perseda*.” Italian influence with its critical controversy over the theory of tragicomedy had not yet made itself felt in England by the close of the sixteenth century; and, with the exception of the Spanish “*Celestina*,” it is safe to assume that continental vernacular precedent was negligible in introducing the new term of dramatic nomenclature across the channel. It is rather to the neo-Latin drama that we must look for the chief source of the first English “*tragical comedies*.”

But the beginnings of tragicomedy in England are not confined within the limits furnished by the collective evidence of the existence and recognition of the type by name. Conclusions based upon such data would be totally inadequate for an

⁶² Above, p. 71, note 12.

understanding of the formative influences contributing to the later finished product. The mingling of tragic and comic, the basic principle of tragicomedy, is evident in almost every form of popular play thruout the period reviewed—in morality, popular tragedy, romantic drama and chronicle history, as well as in the comparatively few so-called “tragical comedies.” And it has been found that this universal characteristic of the national drama is explicable in two ways: first, the persistence of medieval dramatic methods and traditions thruout Elizabethan practise; and second, the character of material furnished playwrights by medieval and Italian romance. To the first influence is due the disconnected jumbling of tragic and comic characteristic of the later moralities, popular tragedies and chronicle histories—a form of mingling universally condemned by classicists as a flagrant violation of decorum, and of little intrinsic importance in the development of tragicomedy, altho apparently never entirely detached from critical notions of the form. Also, to this medieval influence belongs the play of realistic theme and double catastrophe, rewarding virtue and punishing vice—the type illustrated by the early tragicomedies of morality cast, and the precursor of satirical comedy. On the other hand, the main preparation for later tragicomedy has been found to identify itself thruout with the second great influence underlying the mixing of kinds—that contributed by romance. The essential attributes of romantic material—its tragic complications, impending dangers, heroic exploits, suspended action, averted tragedy, happy ending—supplied the very qualities necessary for an artistic blending of tragedy and comedy of the highest theatrical effectiveness, which in time developed naturally into a fixed form of tragicomedy. In the period reviewed, this course of development properly begins with the plays of Edwards and Whetstone, is continued in the work of Lyly and the non-extant romantic plays of the seventies and eighties, reaches its highest expression in the “James IV” of Greene, and ends with the temporary cessation of the romantic note in the Shaksperian plays of the close of the century.

CHAPTER IV

SOME TRANSITIONAL DEVELOPMENTS (1600-1610)

The consummate expression of the drama of pure romance in the work of Shakspeare at the close of the century, marks not only the end of a long period of dominance of that type of drama, but also the beginning of an era of conscious anti-romantic reaction, extending roughly from Jonson's innovation of a comedy of humors in 1598 to the advent of Beaumont and Fletcher on the stage nine or ten years later. During this interval we find the drama undergoing several notable developments in response to altered conditions in social and national life and new standards of dramatic taste. The old imaginative idealism and patriotic fervor that had inspired the age of the Armada had practically subsided by the time of James I; and the chief playwrights of the day were no longer seeking inspiration in the glories of England's past and stories of romantic love, but were finding dramatic material in low London^v life and domestic crimes, or using romantic plots for satirical presentation of contemporary manners. Moreover, due chiefly to the example and precept of Ben Jonson, the drama was losing something of its old extravagance and grotesqueness and becoming more critical and regular. Jonson's ridicule of the absurdities and formlessness of the contemporary stage, his revival of classical canons of art, and his insistence on law and order in things dramatic, were not without influence among his contemporaries. A growing consciousness of art, a more critical attitude of mind, and often an expressed contempt for the absurdities demanded by popular taste, are evidenced in the work of the chief dramatists of the day.¹ The prov-

¹ For example, Webster sarcastically observes in his *White Devil* (1606):

My tragedy must have some idle mirth in 't,
Else it will never pass. (Act. III, end.)

And in his well-known address to the reader prefaced to the play in 1612,

inces of tragedy and comedy become more clearly defined and more generally respected, and for the first time the distinction between a narrative and a dramatic fable gains positive recognition.

During this transitional period when the drama was thus changing in tone and progressing in technic, the tragicomic tradition of the past, denied expression in romance, to some extent found a continued development in the new prevailing types. Domestic comedy frequently dealt with tragic events, problematic reconciliation plays became popular, while the satirical comedy of manners adapted from romantic plots gave equal opportunity for tragedy and for comedy. Moreover, tragicomedy by name was gaining headway as a result of direct foreign influence. All these several developments of the first seven or eight years of the century deserve some notice as leading up to the real outburst of English tragicomedy in the work of Beaumont and Fletcher.

Turning first to the purely domestic drama of the time, we encounter at least one well-defined group of plays belonging to the sphere of intermediate drama. A neutral tone is the universal characteristic of plays turning on the theme of the faithful wife and prodigal husband, or some variation of the same popular motive, which, beginning with "Patient Grissel" (1599), runs thru quite a series of later productions.² All are reconciliation dramas, but range in tone from simple pathos untouched by tragic impulse, as in "Patient Grissel" or the "Wise Woman of Hogsdon" (c. 1604), to the dignity of actual tragedy as in "A Woman Killed with Kindness" (1607). As standing between these two extremes, may be considered three plays, all of uncertain authorship and all repetitions of the same stock theme: "How a Man may Choose a Good

he makes it plain that the exigencies of popular taste render the execution of a true dramatic poem impossible, and that he is forced to sacrifice the principles of his art on account of the "uncapable multitude." Other evidence of the sort indicates that the same theory of dramatic art that Lope de Vega was proclaiming as necessary in Spain about this time was finding an echo in England.

² For an account of these plays, see ed. of *The Faire maide of Bristow* by A. H. Quinn (Dissertation, Pennsylvania, 1902).

Wife from a Bad" (1602), the "Fair Maid of Bristow" (1605) and the "London Prodigal" (1605). The motive in each turns on the story of a prodigal husband who ill-treats or even attempts to murder his faithful wife, and after suffering for his sins, repents and is forgiven. The thing to note in all is the adaptation of a familiar device from Italian romance: the timely reappearance of the supposedly murdered wife, who intercedes for her husband on trial for his crime, saves his life and brings about the reconciliation. This, it will be remembered, is a tragicomic device used so effectively by Giraldi, and the main-spring of the action in Greene's "James IV." By its adoption in these three domestic plays, actual tragedy is skillfully avoided and the reconciliation made complete. In the "Miserics of Enforced Marriage" (1607), however, a play of similar theme by George Wilkins, the path to final repentance and forgiveness is clouded by the suicide of a deserted betrothed; and in Heywood's "A Woman Killed with Kindness," a reversal of the faithful wife motive, the *dénouement* shows the wronged husband forgiving his repentant wife on her deathbed.

But the stamp of actual tragicomedy perhaps finds its closest approximation during these years among so-called satirical or realistic comedies, due to the tragic admixture that necessarily finds its way into such plays. Even in Ben Jonson's work, where the demarcation between tragedy and comedy is most definitely positive, there is one play, "Volpone" (1605), in which the tone of the action and the catastrophe are such as to arouse the query whether the play is not as much tragedy as comedy, and even to call from the author an apology for the juggling of decorum that the sequence of events imposed upon him.³ The fact that romantic plots were frequently com-

³ "And though my catastrophe may, in the strict rigour of comick law, meet with censure, as turning back to my promise; I desire the learned, and charitable critick to haue so much faith in me, to thinke it was done off industrie: For, with what ease I could have varied it, neerer his scale (but that I feare to boast my owne faculty) I could here insert. But my speciall ayme being to put the snaffle in their mouths, that crie out, we neuer punish vice in our enterludes, &c. I tooke the more liberty; though not without some lines of example, drawne euen in the

bined with satiric purpose gave added opportunity for a resulting tragicomic effect. The best specimen of plays of this type is undoubtedly Marston's "Malcontent" (acted 1601), which has added interest in being entered on the Stationers' Register in 1604 as a "Tragicomedia." The scene is laid in Italy, and the plot has to do with the means by which Altofronto, the deposed Duke of Geneva, regains his dukedom by settling at his own court in the disguise of a malcontent, and unmasking to his usurper the villainous intrigues of Mendoza, an upstart courtier, who is aiming at his overthrow. Together they thwart the machinations of the villain; and when the Malcontent finally has the situation well in hand, he discloses his identity, forgives his penitent usurper, and even refuses to stoop to take vengeance on the arch-miscreant Mendoza, whose evil designs have almost caused a succession of bloody tragedies. The play is a theme of villainous plotting thruout, which, together with the interwoven shameful intrigues of the wanton duchess Aurelia, the stabbing of the young gallant, and the cynical and ironical tone with which the author has suffused the whole, combine to give the effect of a tragedy of blood, perverted by the happy ending but not stripped of a horrible realism. Considered individually, the "Malcontent" is certainly a tragicomedy of remarkable construction and power, but not of the kind destined soon to absorb the attention of Jacobean playwrights. Far less somber than this play and yet akin to it in some ways is Chapman's "Gentleman Usher" (c. 1602), a production which takes its title from its main comic figure, Bassiolo, a "humorous" character of some generic resemblance to the Malcontent. This play combines a comedy of humors with a story of romantic love, which supplies the serious interest. Again, an intriguing villain is the root of all the evil. He is the unworthy counsellor of the Duke Alphonsus, who unfortunately cherishes a passion for Margaret, the same fair lady to whom his son, the Prince

ancients themselves, the goings out of whose comœdies are not alwaies ioyfull, but oft-times, the bawdes, the seruants, the riuals, yea, and the masters are mulcted: and fitly, it being the office of a comick-Poet, to imitate iustice, and instruct to life, as well as puritie of language, or stirre up gentle affections." *Dedication.*

- Vincentio, is betrothed. At the climax when the young lovers are discovered, the Prince is mortally wounded by the villain, and Margaret straightway disfigures her beauty by a poisonous ointment in order to avoid a worse fate. But at this point the disastrous state of affairs shifts completely, with something of the suddenness and surprise later employed so effectively in tragicomedy by Beaumont and Fletcher. By a resort to the supernatural, a *deus ex machina* appears in the shape of a wonder-working physician, who heals the Prince's wound and restores the beauty of Margaret. The Duke is now reconciled, and the play ends happily in the marriage of the lovers.

Two other plays of the same authors may also be glanced at here as types of satirical comedy admitting tragic devices, but showing less of any real tragicomic character. In Marston's "Dutch Courtesan" (1605) a man is bidden to kill his closest friend, and he in turn narrowly escapes a similar fate; but the tone of the play, in marked contrast to the "Malcontent," is so completely that of light comedy that the somber parts completely lose their tragic force. Likewise, Chapman's "Widow's Tears" (1605) is essentially a satirical comedy in romantic dress, but presents in the under-plot the ghastly situation of a wife walling herself up to die in the tomb of her supposedly murdered husband, a device that belongs rather to the machinery of tragic horrors. A play of darker cast and more serious complications is Shakspeare's "Measure for Measure" (c. 1604), a more ingenious handling of the same repellent theme of villany and lust earlier dramatized by Giraldi and Whetstone. Again we have a disguised Duke who thwarts the evil designs of a villain, and in the end saves the innocent from tragic fate and pardons the guilty. The tone is serious thruout and tragic situations are plenty; but the plot is stripped of the real theatrical effectiveness of tragicomedy by the interposed soliloquies of the Duke, which act as a kind of chorus and forecast for the audience the happy solution of the difficulties. The same machinery is employed in Middleton's "Phoenix" (1607), a social satire on current corruptions located in Ferrara. The Prince, who has ostensibly set out to travel, remains in disguise at home, where he discovers much

villainy undermining the dukedom, and is even hired to murder his father. Thus he is enabled at the climax to unmask and frustrate the plots of the evil-doers. They are apprehended, and the arch-intriguer merely banished, as in the "Malcontent" and the "Gentleman Usher," as beneath other punishment. Real suspended action is more nearly approximated in a play of the same type, if less romantic, by Edward Sharpham, called the "Fleire" (1605-06). This piece centers the scene in London, and concerns the fortunes of a deposed Italian duke in disguise and the love affairs of his two daughters. The play has all the appearance of a comedy of manners until the fourth act; but here the action takes a tragic turn which is not relaxed until the very conclusion, when the supposed dead are discovered to live, the condemned released, and everything settled happily.

Other examples of mingled drama during this period might be multiplied at some length; but the above mention of the more obvious mixtures of tragic and comic are sufficient to show that the pervading romantic influence of the past century had the effect of continuing the tragicomic tradition in plays of a more pronounced domestic, realistic or satirical tone. In almost every case in the plays we have been considering, the tragic interest is directly traceable to romantic precedent; and frequently it involves only a repetition of the same situations and devices. Moreover, it is noticeable that the sustaining tragic element is handled with a varying degree of dramatic skill; only occasionally is there evidence of the author's appreciation of its value as a device for theatrical effectiveness. The skillful interweaving of tragic and comic to produce the most telling effects of suspense, reverse, surprise—the essentials of tragicomedy—still awaited a more masterful hand.

Reference has been made to the increased critical spirit in the drama of this period and the greater feeling for conceptions of dramatic *genres*; yet in the main, it appears that the more national playwrights still concerned themselves little about fine dramatic distinctions. Tragedy and comedy, while roughly differentiated, could still denote a multitude of varying types, and were used rather with the ending of the plot in mind than

the character of the action. Beyond such broad divisions, it seems that Shakspeare, for example, found endeavors to define and segregate dramatic kinds ridiculous. Thus the pedantic Polonius commends the players for their versatile knowledge of "tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, etc."⁴ All of Shakspeare's plays are grouped by the editors of the first folio in 1623 under the three heads—tragedies, comedies, histories, with the exception of "Troilus and Cressida," which for some reason is omitted from the list, possibly because its jumble of classical tragedy and satirical comedy rendered classification impossible. It is evident that tragedy, comedy and history in the main still continued to be the recognized dramatic types; tho occasional critical comment from playwrights frequently indicates a feeling of the inadequacy of any one of these terms for classifying the play in hand. Of the plays we have been considering as approaching the form of tragicomedy, the "Malcontent" alone offers any contemporary evidence of a connexion with the *genre* name, being registered on the books of the Stationers' company in 1604 as a "Tragicomedia." Yet in the edition of the same year, the author speaks of the play as a "comedy." And of the other plays, most were either printed as comedies or so described by their authors, or left entirely without classification.

In other aspects of the drama, however, these years are not without direct evidence of a growing knowledge in England of tragicomedy as a dramatic form. In Italy at this time the Guarini controversy was still in progress; in France the tragicomedy of Hardy held the center of the public stage; and the

⁴ This series of ironical distinctions is echoed a few years later by John Day in the *Isle of Gulls* (1606), Act. III, sc. 1: "You shall haue some Poet (*Apolloes* Vicar especially) write you a comicall Pastorall Tragicall Muscicall historie in prose will make the auditors eyes runne a water like so many waterspouts." Cp. also Middleton's *Mayor of Queenborough* (pr. 1661), Act V, sc. 1: "*Second Player.* We are, sir; comedians, tragedians, tragi-comedians, comi-tragedians, pastorists, humourists, clownists, satirists: we have them, sir, from the hug to the smile, from the smile to the laugh, from the laugh to the handkerchief."

prevalence of the form in Spain was already beginning to call forth critical opponents and defenders. It is natural, then, that these continental influences should be arousing some echo across the channel. Among the unprinted plays of William Percy, the sonneteer, is one entitled "Arabia Sitiens, or a Dreame of a Drye Yeare, a tragi-comoedye,"⁵ dated by Fleay, 1601. As a play it is probably unimportant; and as it is inaccessible in manuscript, nothing can be said of its character. With it may be mentioned another unprinted and inaccessible tragicomedy of the same period, known only by name, "Diana's Grove: or, the Faithfull Genius,"⁶ an anonymous production and supposedly never acted. And in a print of 1607 we have the Plautine term applied to a curious prose collection of *exempla*, classical and Biblical, written by Lodowick Lloyd and dedicated by him to James I, called "The Tragicomedie of Serpents."⁷ But the leading force in introducing the name of tragicomedy into England at this period is not connected with these relatively unimportant productions, but with a new and positive element in the drama directly traceable to definite foreign precedent—the element of the pastoral. To the influence of Tasso and more particularly Guarini, is due the inspiration for the first definite expression of English pastoralism, Daniel's "Queen's Arcadia" (1605) and Fletcher's "Faithful Shepherdess" (1608?), both pastoral tragicomedies and both historically very important to our subject.

Some indication has already been made of the great popularity of Guarini's famous "Pastor Fido" and its immediate and wide dissemination thruout western Europe. In 1591,

⁵ Percy MS. No. 2, in the collection of the Duke of Northumberland (not Devonshire, as usually stated). Listed in the *Third Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (1872), p. 119. This play is probably to be identified with a manuscript production in the Cambridge Library, *Mahomet and his heaven, or Epimethea, graund Emprise of the deserts of Arabia, or a dreame of a drye summer, or the weather-woman; a tragacomædye*. *Ibid*.

⁶ Before 1603. MS. in private hands. See J. O. Halliwell, *Dictionary*; Fleay, II, 337.

⁷ See Hazlitt, *Coll. and Notes*, p. 260. Also listed in catalogs of British Museum, Bodleian, and Library of B. H. Bright.

almost on the heels of the first edition in Italy, appeared a print of the original in England. A translation followed in 1602, supposed to be the work of John Dymock, and which contained a commendatory sonnet by Samuel Daniel. About the same time there was acted at Cambridge a Latin version of the original, which, from the manuscript that survives,⁸ proves to be a faithful rendering with some omissions, and in place of Guarini's prolog is inserted an original dialog of some critical interest between the characters *Prologus* and *Argumentum*.⁹ It has been suggested that this academic production may have given Fletcher, who is supposed to have been attending Cambridge at this time, his initial impulse to rival the popular Italian tragicomedy. No doubt the play was widely known, especially in scholarly circles, by the time it had aroused direct imitation. At any rate, its popularity was sufficient to bring forth the sarcastic comment of Ben Jonson, writing in "Volpone" in 1605:

Here's Pastor Fido—

. . . . All our *English* writers,
I meane such, as are happy in th' *Italian*,
Will deigne to steale out of this author, mainly;
Almost as much, as from Montagnie;
He has so moderne, and facile a veine,
Fitting the time, and catching the court-eare.¹⁰

This thrust at plagiarism was probably aimed directly at Samuel Daniel, Jonson's rival as court poet, whose "Queenes Arcadia, A Pastorall Trage-Comedie," was acted before the Queen at Christ Church, Oxford, in August, 1605. Some years earlier Daniel had been in Italy where he had met Guarini personally, as he tells us in the commendatory sonnet

⁸ *Il pastor fido, di signor Guarini . . . recitata in Collegio Regali Cantabrigia*. See *Shakspeare Jahrbuch*, XXXIV, 318-19.

⁹ An interesting echo of the discussion over the legitimacy of Guarini's innovation then raging in Italy is contained in one of the speeches of *Argumentum*: "This pastoral tragicomedy is certainly going to be acted: but whence comes this new and outlandish kind? And tragedy among shepherds? The thing itself is totally unsuited to the characters." But *Prologus* replies that altho it is new and strange, everything old has at one time been new. *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Act III, sc. 4.

prefixed to the 1602 English translation of the "Pastor Fido"; and the "Queen's Arcadia" is an obvious attempt to imitate Guarini's dramatic innovation on the English academic stage, further inspired perhaps by the fact that the rival university had already several times presented the original in Latin.¹¹ But, Daniel, while borrowing his general motivation from the "Pastor Fido," together with some items from Tasso, has introduced a device of his own that completely destroys the force of his play as a tragicomedy of the Guarini type. The complications of the conventional love-chain are rendered serious by the evil plottings of a number of invading scoundrels, in whom the author has embodied the corruptions and follies of contemporary England, but all their designs are overheard by two concealed shepherds, who act as a kind of interpreting chorus, and who—we are to understand—will thwart the mischief at the proper time. This they do: the wicked are banished and the state purified. Such an arrangement completely nullifies the element of suspended action as well as the surprise brought about by the happy *dénouement*; while the "danger of death," insisted upon by Guarini, is completely minimized by having the one tragic situation—where the desperate swain Amyntas attempts his own life by poison—narrated and not presented in the action.

Daniel's second attempt at the same kind of drama, "Hymen's Triumph," may be properly dealt with here, altho an interval of almost a decade separates it from the "Queen's Arcadia." From the title we learn that this "Pastorall Tragicomædie" was presented at a court entertainment given by the Queen on the occasion of Lord Roxborough's nuptials, February, 1614. While an occasional piece, it shows considerable improvement over its predecessor. Here we have a pure Arcadian pastoral, devoid of satire, simpler in plot, and constructed with far more feeling for dramatic interest. The story is the usual tangled web of difficulties besetting the for-

¹¹ An anonymous writer of the time in chronicling the performance of the *Queen's Arcadia* says, "It was penned by Mr. Daniel, and drawn out of *Fidus Pastor*, which was sometimes acted by King's College men in Cambridge." *Harl. ms.* 7044. Cp. Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama*, p. 252 n.

tunes of two Arcadian lovers, Thirsis and Silvia, before they are united in happiness. Silvia, who has been separated from her lover and carried off by pirates, returns to Arcadia in disguise as a shepherd boy, and there ensue various love entanglements by reason of her disguise. The climax comes when her identity is discovered by her lover just after she has been stabbed by a jealous shepherd swain. Thirsis, believing her dead, falls into a swoon; and the last act is a mere narrative of how the lovers were restored by the magic "oyntments, oyles and herbes" of Arcadia, and happily united. Thus the plot, while slight and conventional, is on the whole original and arises to a real tragic climax, capable of arousing the pity and terror of the Guarini formula before the happy change.

Both the above plays were court productions, written by a man who had more skill as a poet than a playwright. Apparently Daniel had little interest in the Guarini theory of tragicomedy, at least so far as the handling of the two motives was concerned.¹² While he more nearly approximates a tragicomic result in his later play, his treatment of the sustaining serious interest is inadequate, and in the "Queen's Arcadia" he fails utterly, as suspense is done away with by the device of the two concealed shepherds, and the sole tragic situation kept behind the scenes. But the historical importance of his work is considerable. The "Queen's Arcadia" is the first definite connecting link between Italian and English tragicomedy; and the author's initiative in introducing the new Italian form is to be reckoned with as one of the influences in commending the practise of tragicomedy to others, and especially in preparing the way for Fletcher's "Faithful Shepherdess."

Whereas pastoral tragicomedy first entered England in academic dress in Daniel's "Queen's Arcadia"; in the "Faithful Shepherdess," Fletcher essayed the far more difficult task

¹² Yet that tragicomedy was more than a title name to him is evident from a passage in *Hymen's Triumph* (IV, 3), where Thyrsis asks his companion to entertain him with a story:

No merry tale my boy, nor yet too sad,
But mixed, like the tragicke Comedies.

of adapting the same dramatic form to the requirements of the popular stage, accustomed to rapid action, quick change, violent contrast, and other qualities totally foreign to the Arcadian type. The play was acted probably in 1608,¹³ and that it signally failed for lack of the popular note is evident from the preface and prefixed verses of the undated quarto that followed a year or so later.¹⁴ In the address "To the Reader" prefaced to this edition, Fletcher, piqued by the failure of the piece, enters a critical justification of the dramatic type to which his play belongs; a document of prime historical importance here, for in it the author takes occasion to correct the popular misapprehension of a pastoral tragicomedy as "a play of country hired shepherds in gray cloaks, with curtailed dogs in strings, sometimes laughing together and sometimes killing one another," and to offer a correct and critical definition of the form:

"A tragi-comedy is not so called in respect of mirth and killing, but in respect it wants deaths, which is enough to make it no tragedy, yet brings some near it, which is enough to make it no comedy, which must be a representation of familiar people, with such kind of trouble as no life be questioned; so that a god is as lawful in this as in a tragedy, and mean people as in a comedy."

It is obvious at once that this definition, the first of the sort to appear in England, is neither in any way based on the precedent of the English stage, nor original with the author, but taken over bodily from the Guarini conception of the species—a play not part tragedy and part comedy, but a tempered mean between the two, introducing the danger of death but never death itself, and admitting characters of mingled station.¹⁵ Evidently to the English popular mind tragicomedy still connoted only the mixture of "mirth and killing" of long-standing stage tradition, and to the lack of which in the

¹³ In Jonson's *Conversations with Drummond*, 1618, occurs the passage: "Flesher and Beaumont, ten yeers since, hath written the Faithfull Ship-heardesse, a Tragicomedie, well done." It is now generally conceded that Beaumont had no part in the play.

¹⁴ Published before May, 1610, as one of the persons to whom the play is dedicated died at that time.

¹⁵ Above, p. 41.

"Faithful Shepherdess" Fletcher assigns its failure to please. The important thing to bear in mind is not only Fletcher's contact with the Italian theory of tragicomedy, but his adoption of it in perhaps his first play.

The "Faithful Shepherdess" itself, while evidently inspired by the "Pastor Fido," as shown by the name and the author's concern for critical theory, is neither in plot, situations nor characters an imitation of foreign models. It follows of course the general pastoral tradition of its forebears; but the whole has been recast anew and made in accordance with the author's knowledge of English stagecraft, so that the result is almost an innovation, and, in spite of the initial stage failure, an improvement in every way over Daniel's mere reproduction of Italian methods. The story requires no long introduction, narration gives way to action, the movement is rapid, suspense constant, and the serious situations multiplied. On the other hand, the plot is deficient: its complications, while almost as intricate and involved as those of the "Pastor Fido," do not come to the climax and dissolve in the grand *dénouement* that characterize the Guarini play. All the incidents that involve the various pairs of lovers are the happenings of a single night, and at the end, while misunderstandings are righted, wounds cured, and the culprits banished, the situation in general is practically what it was in the beginning. Thruout there has been neither mirth nor killing. No deaths occur; and, on the other hand, the author has tabooed jocular comedy. But while the play "wants deaths," it "brings some near it" by means of the usual pastoral tragic devices. Twice does the despairing lover attempt to slay himself, twice is the gentle maiden stabbed, and once a meddling gallant; but the hand of suicide is stayed in time, and all wounds are healed in the marvelous Arcadian fashion.

Tho Fletcher had failed to popularize the pastoral, his effort gained the prompt appreciation of readers and even a tardy recognition from the play-going public. One of the five quartos before the folio of 1679 records that in 1633 it was acted "divers times" and "with great applause," and years later in 1663 Pepys writes that it was "much thronged after and often

shown." That the play added much to the critical theory of tragicomedy in England and gave increased impetus to popularizing the name, is certain. Even Ben Jonson in his contemporary "Epicœne" (acted 1609) deigns to use the new term in describing the prank played by Truewit on the two gulls, Sir Amorous La Foole and Sir John Daw, by which each is frightened into believing that the other is seeking his life, and each submits to all sorts of indignities to appease his supposed enemy.¹⁶ And in a colonial pamphlet of 1610, the author compares to a "tragicall-comædie" the fortunes of a sea-faring party wrecked by a tempest on an island of the Bermudas, but happily delivered from threatened destruction.¹⁷ Two years later, in 1612, an entry in the Stationers' Register mentions "a Tragedomedye called, The Noble man written by Cyrill Tourneur," one of the plays destroyed by Warburton's servant, and now not known to exist.¹⁸

The leading influence in fostering the *genre* name in England at this time was no doubt Fletcher's play, reinforced by Daniel's pastoral tragicomedies. Of more significance, how-

¹⁶ "Truewit. Agreed. Perhaps 'twill bee the better estate. Doe you obserue this gallerie? or rather lobby, indeed? Here are a couple of studies, at each end one: here will I act such a *tragi-comady* betweene the *Guelphes*, and the *Ghibellines*, Daw and La-Foole—which of 'hem comes out first, will I seize on: (you two shall be the *chorus* behind the arras, and whip out betweene the *acts* and speake,)" Act IV, sc. 5. By a strange coincidence perhaps, Rabelais, in his *Pantagruel* (1533), IV, 12, describes as a *tragicque comedie* a strikingly similar situation. See above, p. 52, n. 63. It may be noted here that on the frontispiece of the 1616 folio of Ben Jonson's plays appears a figure of "Tragicomoedia"—by the side of "Tragoedia" and "Comoedia"—arrayed with crown and scepter, a buskin on one foot and a sock on the other. That pastoral tragicomedy is meant by this unique design is evident enough, as Creizenach points out, because on both sides of the figure appear a shepherd and a satyr. See Creizenach, *Geschichte*, IV (pt. 1.), 269-70.

¹⁷ "What is there in all this **tragicall-comædie**, that should discourage us with impossibilitie of the enterprise? when of all the fleete, one onely ship by a secret leak was indangered, and yet in the gulfe of despaire was so graciously preserved." *A true Declaration of the estate of the Colonie in Virginia*, 1610. See Furness's *New Variorum Shakespeare, Tempest* (1892), p. 311.

¹⁸ Acted by the King's Players at Court Revels, 1612.

ever, is the fact that this play, a tragicomedy constructed according to critical theory, marks the initial stage of the dramatic careers of Fletcher and his first collaborator Beaumont, and discloses the source of the inspiration underlying the definitely formulated type of tragicomedy that is their peculiar contribution to the English drama. These two authors, during the short period of their collaboration, seem to have been the most popular playwrights of the time, while the potency of their influence on their contemporaries and followers is attested by the ruling character of the drama up to 1642. With them we enter the heyday of English tragicomedy, extending approximately from 1610 to the closing of the theaters, a period characterized by the cultivation of tragicomedy by practically all playwrights of the day, and its ascendancy in popularity over every dramatic form.

CHAPTER V

THE HEYDAY OF ENGLISH TRAGICOMEDY (1610 TO 1642)

Of Fletcher's actual collaboration with Beaumont, which extended to the latter's retirement in 1612, and which resulted in the group of dramas whose great success signalized the return to romantic and heroic themes, two plays, "Philaster" and "A King and No King," stand forth as the forerunners of the new type of English tragicomedy. The characteristics of "heroic romance," as the plays of this collaboration have been called, are too well known to be dwelt on here.¹ The scene is always located far enough away in foreign realms to allow the imagination to wander at will, unhampered by the restrictions of reality; and melodramatic actions, warring passions and marvelous events are right in keeping with the romantic atmosphere and heroic protagonists to which we are introduced. Characterization, probability, actuality, ethical value—all are sacrificed to theatrical effect or anything sensational or startling that an ingeniously constructed plot may be made to offer. Instead of an action plodding to an inevitable conclusion or interspersed with impeding explanations pointing to the outcome, inevitableness is thrown to the winds, and a constant use of surprise, reverse, and surprise again, hold the fates of the heroes and heroines in the balance until the very end, when the final turn of fortune grants them heroic death or snatches them from impending disaster.

It is chiefly by the character of the *dénouement* that "Philaster" and "A King and No King" are to be distinguished from the tragic romances with which they are so closely identified in all else. Both follow the essentials of the Beaumont-Fletcher innovation: distant setting, royal persons, complicated plot, balance and contrast in character and emotion; and both

¹ A. H. Thorndike, *The Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakespeare* (1901), on which the first pages of this chapter are entirely based.

end happily. Yet the two plays are anything but repetitions. In "Philaster" an idyllic, and in "A King and No King" a martial tone prevails. Philaster is a lily-livered hero enthralled in sentimental love; Arbaces a violent monarch overwhelmed by a sudden and unnatural passion. In the earlier play we have a striking example of tragicomedy in process of transition from pure pastoral to romance. We note at once the pervading pastoral influence in the forest scenes and Arcadian devices; while the shepherds and ideal commonwealth demanded by the Guarini formula as necessary for the intermediate nature of tragicomedy are supplanted by the equally Utopian characters and surroundings of a romantic no man's land. The play doubtless followed close in the wake of the "Faithful Shepherdess." The course of sentimental love is crossed by evil slander; and the distracted hero, convinced that his lady and faithful page have played him false, comes upon them in turn in the forest and stabs them both, quite in the manner of the jealous shepherd swain of pastoral tragicomedy. The fifth act shows all healed of their wounds, misunderstandings righted, and the lovers reconciled; but the tragic complications have only begun. The king in a fit of royal anger that his daughter should defy his authority and claim the lowly Philaster as her husband when he had intended her for a prince, sentences both lovers to death. Here an insurrection of citizens compels the monarch to recall his sentence, and after the erratic hero has offered twice to kill himself, the final surprising discovery that the page Bellario is a love-lorn damsel in disguise discloses the miscreants and restores the hero to his rightful place as heir to the crown of Sicily. In "A King and No King" the action is less fluctuating but no less threatening, and the happy ending equally well concealed to the last. Arbaces seems irresistibly impelled along to crime by the force of an ungovernable passion for his supposed sister. He struggles against it in vain, and finally succumbs. But in the last act at the very culmination of his resolve to commit murder, incest, and follow all with suicide, the tragic suspense is broken by a complete surprise: a timely explanation reveals that Panthea is not his sister, and the succession of tragedies is stayed.

The popularity of these two tragicomedies was not only immediate but remarkably long continued, as innumerable editions and stage revivals even as late as the nineteenth century abundantly attest; while the imitation they aroused from others and the continuation of the same type by Fletcher alone and with later collaborators is additional evidence of their favorable reception by the courtly audience for which they were written, an audience always responsive to appeals to the imagination and sympathies and lately sated with dark tragedy and domestic drama. The initial success of "Philaster" even seems to have impelled Shakspeare to undertake the same sort of drama at the close of his career, if indeed "Cymbeline" followed the Beaumont-Fletcher innovation as the probabilities all indicate.² With all the striking parallels in character, plot and treatment between the two plays, the Shaksperian drama, by reason of its subservience to the trammels of the past, is less a tragicomedy of the new type. The older epic method of construction is followed, apparitions appear among the *dramatis personæ*, war comes to the foreground and a battle is represented on the stage, and the final defeat of villainy and triumph of romantic love has left death behind it. The "Winter's Tale" is likewise sufficiently distinguished by effective situations, tragicomic *dénouement* and the essentials of the new romance type to justify the opinion that it was inspired by the current trend of popular drama rather than by a new view of life on the part of the author. Structurally, however, it is related to the old school of rambling romance even more than "Cymbeline" is. The play is really in two parts: the first tragic, involving the deaths of Antigonus and the young prince as in the old romance of Greene; but the second part is untouched with death, as Shakspeare, unlike his predecessor, apparently did not feel the necessity of crowning the union of the young lovers with any "Tragicall stratagem,"³ and accordingly shows the unjust king repentant at the end, and his repentance rewarded with the restoration of

² See A. H. Thorndike, *Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakspeare*, p. 152 ff.

³ Above, p. 82, note 26.

his queen whom he has thought dead. Shakspeare's third and last romance, on the other hand, the "Tempest," departs completely from the loose structure of its predecessors, admits no actual tragedy, and is even further removed from the world of fact and reality. Again there is a story of sentimental love, framed in a background of intrigue and murderous design; but the action never reaches a really threatening crisis, tho the tone of the play is distinctly exalted above the pitch of romantic comedy.

✓ Whether Shakspeare was led to adopt the tragicomic method in his last plays by the example of Beaumont and Fletcher, who probably at this time surpassed him in popular favor, or by his own initiative, is a question of no especial importance here. The fact remains that "Cymbeline," "Winter's Tale" and the "Tempest," whatever the inspiration, are closely identified with the new drama of tragicomic romance, which at least testifies to the success that the new form was winning by the time Shakspeare and Beaumont were quitting the stage about 1612.

— The historical position of "Philaster" and "A King and No King" as the first two tragicomedies of the young collaborators, and the only ones in which Beaumont had a hand, somewhat separates them from the whole series of similar plays that came from the pen of Fletcher either writing alone or in collaboration with others during the next dozen years in which he continued to produce for the theater. But it is in this later body of plays that the form thus inaugurated receives the elaborate and varied development that renders the Fletcherian contribution to tragicomedy the most considerable and influential of the period.

In approaching these plays the question immediately arises, Which are the tragicomedies? Most of the so-called Beaumont and Fletcher plays were not printed until years after they were written, and not until the folio of 1679 were any recognized as tragi-comedies, so that contemporary evidence of their classification is unavailable. On the other hand, to establish definite criteria of our own that will at once be comprehensive and satisfactory for the separation of the form from tragedy

and comedy is certainly impossible; and, as Fletcher after the preface to the "Faithful Shepherdess" evidently ceased to trouble himself with expounding critical distinctions in dramatic *genres*, further authoritative testimony of that sort is lacking. True, the general principles he there laid down differentiating tragicomedy from other forms might be employed with some satisfaction in classifying his unaided plays;⁴ but the definition is clearly inadequate when applied to the collaborated productions. It seems possible, however, to construct a graduated scale of Fletcherian tragicomedy, and between the extremes where the type stiffens into tragedy on the one hand, and seems to ally itself with comedy on the other, to establish a tragicomic norm that will serve to define the species in its purity. In accordance with this plan, some eight plays have been selected that seem to represent in incident, tone and treatment the desired mean of the type as it is found in the work of Fletcher and his later collaborators. At least as many again waver slightly one way or the other, but preserve many of the essentials of the form, and possibly are quite as important as tragicomedies when we consider the multiform gradations that the type assumes during the later Elizabethan period. They will call for some notice later. The eight plays chosen to illustrate the tragicomic mean are the following: "Loyal Subject," "Mad Lover," "Island Princess," "A Wife for a Month," "Humorous Lieutenant," "Queen of Corinth," "Knight of Malta" and "Laws of Candy." Of these the first five are ascribed to Fletcher alone; in the last three Massinger is usually rated the chief collaborator. With the exception of the "Knight of Malta" which remained unclassified, all were recognized as tragicomedies in the second folio of 1679, the first to include the species among its divisions.

In these plays we find only an amplification of the main traits of character and technic noticeable in "Philaster" and "A King and No King" and the earlier romance tragedies. The heroic and lofty tone is no whit abated in the serious portions, tho in occasional comic scenes Fletcher's exuberant humor

⁴ Cp. O. L. Hatcher, *John Fletcher* (Chicago, 1905), p. 29.

is more pronounced.⁵ The idyllic atmosphere of "Philaster" is never repeated, and purely sentimental heroes and heroines in general give way to stancher types. We are still conducted to regions just beyond the more familiar seventeenth century world, ranging from the remote Molucca Islands to distant corners of Greece and far Muscovy; and the action seldom takes us far from court or palace. The highest ideals of love and honor and the extremes of loyalty, friendship, constancy and other noble emotions are kept in constant contrast with the basest passions and the deepest villainy. The chief characters, good and evil, all belong to the highest social rank, and from constant repetition assume more or less conventional outlines. The lustful monarch bent on seduction, the magnanimous hero inspired with the loftiest ideals, the plotting villain who when caught in his own snares repents and is forgiven, the noble heroine, virtuous and eloquent, and sometimes sentimental as well, whose chastity is unassailable and who will live or die with her lover, the straightforward friend—all are types that recur again and again among royal families, nobles, courtiers, valiant generals, and heroes and heroines in ordinary that make up the leading *dramatis personæ* of Fletcherian tragicomedy.

No impossibility or extravagance in motive or situation is left unattempted to produce sensational or startling theatrical effects, usually with a resulting overthrow of probability and logic and a complete disregard of ethical value. In one play we have a mad lover bent on cutting out his own heart as a present to a disdainful mistress; in another, a valiant general whose loyalty to a sovereign who has covered him with indignities is such that he will kill his own son for rebelling against the despot; and again, a ravished maiden suing for the life and hand of her princely seducer. All are pervaded to a greater or less extent with the passions, motives and accompaniments of actual tragedy—lust, jealousy, revenge, intrigue, murderous

⁵ Whereas the only comedy is furnished by the character of the Captain in *Philaster* and by Bessus in *King and No King*, a number of these plays are freely interspersed with comic scenes supplied by characters drawn from the lower walks of life.

design, torture, rape, duels, poisons, and the like. With few exceptions villainy in one form or another is the root of the disastrous complications that beset the path of love or virtue, or perhaps threaten a whole court with ruin. A favorite motive is the lust of a king or prince for the betrothed of another, as in the "Humorous Lieutenant," "Queen of Corinth" and "Wife for a Month," or the vengeance of a rejected suitor, as in the "Knight of Malta" and the "Island Princess"; while an intriguing court favorite, jealous of a rival general, is the evil genius in the "Loyal Subject"; and in the "Laws of Candy" the malice of a father toward a son is responsible for the serious entanglement. Notable in most of these plays is the prominence given to the tragicomic villain, a personage whose deviltry absurdly contradicts his sudden conversion, and whose forgiveness at the end or dismissal with perfunctory punishment far from satisfies any sense of moral justice. In "A Wife for a Month" and the "Knight of Malta" the evil-doers are reinforced by diabolical confederates as black as the villains of Webster, but they also share in the pardon meted out to their masters; and the repellant climax of the "Queen of Corinth," described as an "unexpected comedy," exemplifies the limit of the perverted ethics produced by diverting a tragic action away from its logical conclusion.

In distribution of the serious interest these plays range somewhat from a type where the climax is the culmination of one continuous succession of averted dangers, reverses, surprises, and scenes of violence, as in the "Knight of Malta" and the "Island Princess," to such plays as "A King and No King" and the "Laws of Candy," where the action moves ominously but without disastrous interruption to one final tragic situation. In all, however, the general tone and style are maintained at an elevation of dignity scarcely distinguishable from that of tragedy, or at least seldom far below it. And in each the suspense is sustained until the very last, when the threatening catastrophe by one means or another is resolved into happiness and reconciliation. Naturally every possible tragicomic device is brought into play repeatedly—death sentences are reversed, executions stayed, villainy is disclosed, the

dead come to life, the evil repent, rescues arrive, duels are interrupted, and poisons turn out to be opiates or miscarry entirely.

The effective climax, on which Fletcher and his collaborators lavished the wealth of their ingenuity, is always a carefully planned affair, and usually led up to by a series of cleverly arranged situations which place the characters in such interrelation that at the crucial moment the *dénouement* unravels of its own accord. A good example of this is shown in the "Laws of Candy." By the law of the land those convicted of ingratitude may be punished with death, if the offended one choose to claim the penalty. In the last act Cassilane, the jealous father, appears before the Senate and demands the execution of the law against his son Antinous, who has displaced him in popular favor. Straightway, the haughty princess Erotia, in love with the young hero, enters a similar charge against the father, whose poverty she has been the means of relieving. Next, the noble Antinous arises in behalf of his unjust father and charges the Princess in turn with ingratitude toward him. And on top of it all, Annophil, Cassilane's daughter, accuses the Senate of base ingratitude toward both father and son for thus rewarding their noble service to the state. When the chain of accusations has reached these appalling proportions, Cassilane, impressed with the dire results of his malice, repents his action and withdraws his charge; the others of course follow in turn, and thus the clever, if absurdly impossible, situation is happily relieved. The knot, as in this case, is often cut by a timely repentance or some similar change of heart so common in tragicomedy. The Mad Lover, at sight of his supposedly dead brother, suddenly loses his madness; and the King in the "Humorous Lieutenant" is so impressed with the virtuous eloquence of Celia that he straightway repents his evil purpose and opens the way for the happy ending. Occasionally, as noticed earlier in "Philaster," the tragic suspense is carried on even beyond the actual climax. In the "Loyal Subject," for example, the action properly culminates at the end of Act IV in the fall of the villain and the restoration of Archas to

the Duke's favor. But in the final act we have the quixotic general attempting to slay his own son for treason, and he is only turned from his dire intention by the threat of a counter tragedy.

Noticeable in all the plays thus far considered as illustrative of the norm of Fletcherian tragicomedy is the fact that amid all the perils and trials that befall the characters death never occurs in any form, neither overtaking the most trivial person nor the darkest villain. And in this respect all conform to Fletcher's earlier critical stipulation that a tragicomedy should "want deaths." Yet the rigid application of this test in differentiating the type from tragedy would prove unsatisfactory, excluding many plays that were either rated as tragicomedies in their own day or satisfy our other criteria for the form. While Fletcher's unaided tragicomedies never thus impeach on the realm of tragedy, his collaborated productions occasionally do. Such a play is the "Two Noble Kinsmen,"⁶ evidently in part by Shakspeare.⁷ In its romantic extravagance, idyllic atmosphere, glorification of noble ideals, heroic action and characters, the play preserves the familiar traits of the *genre* form; and the fact that the Chaucerian story imposes the death of one hero in the end produces no spirit of tragic gloom. On the contrary, this very incident is made the most of to effect a telling and surprising tragicomic *dénouement*; for Palamon's head is just saved from the block by the accident that befalls his kinsman, and this tragedy is forgotten in the triumph of romantic love. Another example where tragedy and tragicomedy clasp hands is furnished by the "Lovers' Progress," a play obviously more Massinger's than Fletcher's. Here the main plot, founded on one of the "Tragi-comicall Histories" of the time,⁸ turns on the moral conflict confront-

⁶ Entered S. R. April 8, 1634-35, as a "TragiComedy."

⁷ See A. H. Thorndike, *Influence of Beaumont and Fletcher on Shakspeare*, p. 44 ff.

⁸ *A Tragi-comicall History of our Times, under the Borrowed Names of Lisander and Calista*, translated from the French of Vital d'Audignier by a certain W. D. in 1627. Among contemporary prose romances similarly named may be cited, *a booke called ffour true tragicomicall Histories of Late tymes by the names of the Lady Cornelia. The force of blood The*

ing Calista and Lisander, who are beset by a mutual passion on the one hand, and fidelity to a husband and friend on the other. The tragic death of Cleander solves the dilemma, and the lovers, who have struggled successfully against their passion, are allowed to marry in a year; but the culprits are haled off to punishment, and the ending is not the complete reconciliation usually accorded tragicomedy. The "Prophetess," again, while described as a "Tragical History," is really a tragedy of happy ending; for the epical structure of the piece renders the slaying of Aper by the hero Dioclesian in the second act more or less incidental to the whole. Otherwise the play, while operatic and spectacular to a marked degree, is a tragicomedy of the austere and heroic type, at the close of which the ambitious and jealous Maximilian, thwarted in his attempt on the life of his benefactor by the magic of the Prophetess, repents, is forgiven, and all ends happily.

On the other hand, we have a similar group of collaborated productions, represented by the "Honest Man's Fortune," "Custom of the Country" and "Fair Maid of the Inn," which verge as far on the other side of the tragicomic norm.⁹ In point of harrowing situations, quick change of fortune, and danger of death, they are tragicomedies of pronounced cast, and yet in other respects represent the union of the Fletcherian form with comedy. Marked differences in general tone and character clearly separate these productions from the plays that define the type in its purity. The scene is brought nearer home; heroic actions and extreme emotions are tempered; the atmosphere becomes more natural; kings, queens and generals give way to dukes, counts and gentlemen and ladies in more ordinary walks of life; and above all, purely comic portions are given almost equal prominence with the serious themes. In short, these plays seem to approach most nearly the spirit

two Damsells, and The Spanish Lady Don Diego Pudeser (? by Sir William Berkeley).—S. R. Nov. 27, 1638; also Alexander Hart's *Tragicomical History of Alexto and Angelica, Containing the progresse of a zealous Candide, and Masculine Love. With a various mutability of a feminine affection. Together with loves Justice thereupon*. London, 1640.

⁹ Of these the first and last were denominated tragicomedies in the 1679 folio, while the *Custom of the Country* was left unclassified.

and form of the contemporary Spanish Cloak and Sword drama. Whether or not Fletcher was directly influenced by Lope and his school, he, like many of his contemporaries, was using Spanish plots; and certainly many of the traits of the Peninsular drama are preserved in his work.¹⁰

Questions of honor of various sorts are especially prominent in these three plays. A woman's character is at stake in the "Honest Man's Fortune"; in the "Custom of the Country" we have the episode of the mother who will not violate the laws of hospitality even to betray the man whom she thinks has killed her son; and a trivial quarrel in the "Fair Maid of the Inn" embroils two noble families in feud. Duels between gentlemen are the order of the day, and thrilling surprises and reverses keep the interest keyed to a high pitch in spite of the plentifully interspersed comedy and burlesque. In the "Honest Man's Fortune" bloodshed is repeatedly averted by the timely intervention of the wronged Duchess, whose insulted honor is the cause of quarrel; and the climactic scene in Act IV, which brings the repentance of the husband, is crowded with a lightning succession of averted tragedies and thrilling surprises. But in many ways this production of composite authorship is only a comedy of manners located in Paris, and in the incident of the Honest Man disguised as a waiting maid even seems to be burlesquing the love-lorn damsel in page attire. A romance of Cervantes underlies the "Custom of the Country," a play suffused with tragicomic movement in spite of its coarsely comic sub-plot. The direst misfortunes and dangers beset the course of romantic love, tossed hither and thither on the wave of an ever fluctuating fortune. The distracted hero's lament in one place,

My life's so full
Of various changes, that I now despair
Of any certain port; one trouble ending,
A new, and worse, succeeds it,

bespeaks the nature of the main interest. In Zenocia, the equally tried heroine, we have a repetition of the chaste and scathingly eloquent type, whose reverses are finally rewarded

¹⁰ For literature on this subject, see Schelling, II, 530.

by union with her noble lover when repentance has turned the hearts of their enemies. But in this play and in the "Fair Maid of the Inn" the comic portions are elaborated to an extent that tempers the tone of the whole; and in the "Spanish Curate," a play perhaps to be included in this group, the prominence of the sub-plot relegates the serious theme to a place of subordinate concern.

Equally identified with the above as Fletcherian tragicomedies of lighter cast are the more romantic plays of the "Sea Voyage" and "Women Pleased,"¹¹ in both of which comedy, extravaganza and sentimental love are interwoven with a main serious interest that results from the possibilities of a romantic plot rather than from villainy or evil passions. The "Sea Voyage" particularly is a peculiar combination of thrilling adventure, distress, and even horrors, with the vivacity and humor of comedy, and crowns its action with a most effective tragicomic *dénouement*, where a wholesale human sacrifice ordered by the Amazon Queen is stayed by the opportune appearance of her supposedly dead husband, whose manes are about to be appeased in this way. "Women Pleased" is equally composite in tone and action. In its main plot it is strongly reminiscent of the medieval motive of the Wife of Bath's Tale, whose effective conclusion is made the most of in the happy ending.

To these plays which obviously indicate the point where Fletcherian tragicomedy and comedy shade into one another, others might be added in some number which admit seriousness and accordingly raise some doubt as to their rigid exclusion from the type form. Certainly no definite barrier between the two species can be erected; but general tone as well as incident must be considered in determining the claims of a play to the classification of tragicomedy. To admit within the pale all plays in which characters are brought "near death," and thereby to comply with one part of Fletcher's own definition for the form, is obviously impracticable. For in many of the broadest comedies tragicomic devices abound—wounds inflicted and lives momentarily imperilled—for gain in the-

¹¹ *Women Pleas'd, A Tragy-Comedy*, 1679 folio.

atrical effectiveness; and it is certainly a far cry from plays like "Nice Valor" and "Love's Pilgrimage" to "Philaster" and the "Knight of Malta." It seems reasonable, then, considering the exalted and heightened tone that is characteristic of the tragicomic mean, to allow the test of style to enter into our criteria in distinguishing the form from comedy on the one hand, just as its severance from tragedy at the opposite end of the scale is to be determined by the character of the *dénouement*.

With the bounds of Fletcherian tragicomedy thus arbitrarily indicated and the characteristics of the type reviewed in some detail in its various gradations, it remains in conclusion to emphasize the peculiar attribute of the form that represents the distinctive contribution of its authors to English tragicomedy, and accounts for its great stage success. Only a cursory glance is necessary to reveal that, amid all the advances that the new type represents over preceding tragicomedy, it is the handling of the *dénouement* more than anything else that separates it furthest from its forebears, and underlies the secret of its theatrical effectiveness and immediate and long continued popularity. Other authors in preceding realistic and domestic drama had involved the fortunes of their characters in tragic entanglements and managed to extricate them safely, but usually by the clumsy aid of the conventional disguised personage whose identity and purpose were no secret to the audience, or by some other device equally calculated to forecast the outcome. In Fletcherian tragicomedy these weaknesses of technic have entirely disappeared. Suspense is maintained until the very end, and the action, whether advanced from the start by constant reversals and surprisals of fortune or led up to one serious climax, may end either in a triumph or catastrophe so far as the spectators have any means of divining. This trait of technic—the absolute concealment of the character of the *dénouement*—from now on becomes a most important and determining factor in tragicomedy, and is rarely neglected by future cultivators of the form. To realize the immense gain in effect secured by its observance, one need only compare a tragicomedy of the

Fletcherian type with such a play as the "Heir" (1620) of Thomas May, wherein the old order of technic is preserved by the use of the expository soliloquy, and the possibilities of a most effective tragicomedy thereby precluded. It may not be determined whether Fletcher and his collaborators derived the idea of thus enhancing the effectiveness of tragicomedy from Italian or Spanish precedent—to one of which at least they were definitely indebted—or invented it themselves.^{11a} At any rate, they were quick to perceive the value that a play which could keep the interest of the spectators constantly wrought up to a high pitch of excitement, and at the same time satisfy the ever-popular preference for the happy ending, offered over all other dramatic forms, and they cultivated it to the full. Tragicomedy in all its shades becomes now the most frequently cultivated form in the work of those who carried on and developed the Beaumont and Fletcher traditions—Massinger, Shirley, Davenant, and the host of minor dramatists of the reign of Charles I—and it even exerted considerable influence on contemporary writers of realistic and domestic drama.

To this last group of playwrights some attention is due at this point before considering the logical development of the subject in the continuators of the romantic drama. For in the work of Heywood, Middleton, Dekker, and one or two others, tragicomedy during this period is not unrepresented, and even offers some departures from the prevalent form that call for special notice. A number of these plays seem to have been directly influenced by the popular Fletcherian type; the most noticeable comparison being offered by Heywood's "Royal King and Loyal Subject,"¹² which must have followed Fletcher's tragicomedy of the same theme and probably owed its inspiration to it. Both plays are versions of the same story in Painter's "Palace of Pleasure," with differences in treatment characteristic of the two authors. Instead of Muscovy,

^{11a} True, this concealment of *dénouement* and final surprise are features of Ben Jonson's *Epicure* (acted 1609), which possibly may have inspired the practise in Fletcher and his fellows. The reverse seems more probable, however.

¹² See edition by K. W. Tibbals, Pennsylvania Thesis (1906), with critical introduction on sources and relations with Fletcher's *Loyal Subject*.

the scene in Heywood is brought to England, where the Loyal Subject is a "Martiall," his traducers two envious lords, and his sovereign a King of England, who, whether swayed by slanderous tongues or from mere capriciousness, is bent on testing to the full the loyalty of his patient subject. With a humility worthy of Patient Grissel, the noble Marshal submits to every indignity and demand, until at the end of Act IV his fidelity and generosity have so prevailed with the monarch that he is given the princess to wife and restored to full favor. Here is the logical conclusion of the play, but Heywood, like Fletcher, adopts the device of carrying the suspense over into the next act, only does it less skillfully. The slanderers are again allowed the King's ear; the Marshal's fortunes undergo another reverse; he is condemned for high treason on a trumped up charge and sentenced to die. But at the point of execution, the capricious monarch relents—whether by a sudden change of heart or in accord with a prearranged plan of his own, is not clear—reverses the sentence and banishes the base accusers. As usual in Heywood, the main theme is parodied by a comic sub-plot barely connected with the main design, in which a captain, a clown and other realistic characters are the moving figures.

The "Royal King and Loyal Subject" is the tragicomedy of Heywood that nearest challenges comparison with the type cultivated by his courtly contemporaries, altho late in his career he turned again to the same kind of drama and produced in the "Challenge for Beauty" a tragicomedy of romantic plot—welded of course to England—which similarly points to the inspiration of Fletcher and Massinger. On the other hand, the early "Fortune by Land and Sea," in which Rowley collaborated, like the "Fair Maid of the West," illustrates the older and less skillful method of uniting tragic and comic material, and have little in common with the Fletcherian type. Both combine stories of English domestic life with stirring adventures, which take the characters off to sea or distant lands. Duels, violent deaths, battles at sea, and strange happenings, the whole plentifully interspersed with English clownage, make up a jumbled action which concludes satisfactorily for those

with whom our sympathies are allied. Usually no care is taken to maintain suspense or hold the outcome in the balance. The surprises are all prepared for by a constant shifting of the scene from one plot to the other, a device which serves to keep the spectators continually informed of the trend of events; and the perils and marvelous adventures that befall Spencer and his faithful Bess in the second Part of the "Fair Maid" are met with and disposed of in turn in the old chronicle way until the lovers are at last united and sent home in happiness.

As a playwright Heywood shared little in the more critical attitude of his chief contemporaries toward the drama. He belonged rather among those whose theory of dramatic art was based on popular taste, and he constructed his plays accordingly, mingling the tragic and comic haphazardly as the last two plays illustrate. His conception of tragicomedy, if ascertained from the one play which he himself so describes, was probably only that of long-standing stage tradition. Certainly the "English Traveller" has little in common with the prevailing type, yet, according to the author's preface of 1633, it is a "tragi-comedy," and more than that, "one reserved amongst two hundred and twenty" which Heywood claims to have written wholly or in part. If this astounding statement be taken literally, Heywood's own original output of tragi-comedies must have been enormous. But neither in subject matter nor construction is this play related to the Fletcherian form. It is purely a domestic drama of sentiment, involving a moral problem and outcome similar to those of the author's earlier "Woman Killed with Kindness"—the wife who has been taken in adultery dying repentant after being reproached with her sin. While thus related to tragedy, the play departs radically from the current conceptions of that form of drama. It lacks the courts, kings, foreign setting, bloodshed and other accompaniments of established convention; and belongs rather among serious middle-class plays which waver between domestic tragedy and sentimental comedy. And the ending, if far from happy, at any rate satisfies our sense of moral justice, so that the author's title of tragicomedy is not a complete misnomer.

A far more anomalous use of the title term is furnished by

the equally unromantic "Witch of Edmonton," printed in 1658, years after it was written,¹³ as "A known true Story. Composed into A Tragi-Comedy," and ascribed to the joint authorship of Rowley, Dekker, Ford and others. Far from being a tragicomedy at all, the play is a pure domestic tragedy, reaching heights of remarkable pathos and power. The whole harrowing nature of the two-fold plot is summed up in the introductory distich:

Forc'd marriage, murder; murder blood requires;
 Reproach, revenge; revenge hell's help desires.

The first motive deals with the domestic entanglements of Frank, Susan and Winnifred, involving a forced marriage and culminating in murder; the supernatural concerns the weird figure of old Mother Sawyer, driven by the persecution of her neighbors to ally herself with witchcraft. It is the Witch's familiar, in the shape of a black dog, that, rubbing against the leg of Frank, impels him to murder his innocent wife. He attempts to hide his crime by casting suspicion on others; but his guilt is discovered in a scene of remarkable tragic intensity, in which appear the ghost of the murdered Susan and the evil spirit of the black dog. The last act shows the Witch, apprehended for the mischief and crimes her magic have caused, on the way to execution; and next, the deeply repentant Frank, also convicted and led off to expiate his crime. But the action does not end in a spirit of tragic depression. The concluding lines are:

Join, friends, in sorrow; make of all the best;
 Harms past may be lamented, not redrest.

The play is pervaded thruout by a moral earnestness, and enforces a lesson of deep impressiveness in that day of witchcraft; and thus it may be considered a belated example of the old morality idea of tragicomedy.

Middleton's contribution to the species encompasses three plays. They were written in the latter part of his career when

¹³ The play is founded on an account of one "Elizabeth Sawyer of Islington," who was "executed in 1621 for witchcraft" (Schelling, I, 362); and is thereby linked to contemporary murder plays, of which there had been quite a vogue about the beginning of the century.

Fletcher and Massinger were in the ascendancy, and while more or less unlike, all show the influence in one way or another of the popular romantic form. The celebrated "Fair Quarrel," in which Rowley collaborated, belongs clearly with the domestic and problematic tragicomedies; yet the main interest, which involves a point of honor culminating in a duel, relates it to the romantic type of his contemporaries, where similar motives but of less human interest are frequent. Furthermore, the plot is conducted to its happy ending with an ingenuity and telling force that challenge favorable comparison with Fletcher's tragicomic art, but without his usual conversions of character and melodramatic excess. In the "Spanish Gypsy," on the other hand, Middleton and Rowley turned to the novels of Cervantes for material, and produced a play that takes a definite place beside the tragicomedies of Fletcher that hark back to Spanish sources. The criminal injury inflicted on the innocent heroine at the start recalls the dark beginning of the "Queen of Corinth," but the reconciliation is effected with far less shock to the moral sense, and the serious portions are accompanied thruout with a profusion of comedy. Of yet different cast is the "Tragi-Coomodie, called The Witch," the old manuscript play that represents Middleton's unaided contribution to the species. Here we have a tragedy of the later revenge type turned in the mould of Fletcherian tragicomedy, and vying with Marston's "Malcontent" in dark intrigue and tragic accessories: a romantic plot furnishes three revenge motives; a duchess is compelled by her husband to drink from the skull of her slain father; a jealous husband stabs those whom he takes to be his adulterous wife and her paramour; poisons are taken; and the witch scenes contribute their quota of repellent features. Both in the tangle of tragic complications that involve everyone and in the conventional devices of the tragicomic *dénouement* with its happy discoveries and sudden conversions of character, the influence of Fletcher's technic is strongly evident. One character, indeed, is disposed of behind the scenes to clear the way for the happy ending, but the rest are joyfully united. The wrong persons have been stabbed, and they only wounded, poisons are of the

tragicomic kind, and the Duke, discovered dead, arises in time to save his Duchess from execution.

The prevailing fashion of tragicomedy seems also to have induced Webster to produce the "Devil's Law Case," and Dekker, "Match Me in London." The former production, published in 1623 as "A new Tragedy," has the distinction of being the only English popular play known to have been printed as a tragicomedy between the pastorals of Daniel and Fletcher and 1630. It offers a plot of Italian intrigue, involving villainy, revenge and murderous design, with few characters that enlist our sympathies. The complicated plot unrolls as it progresses, and culminates in a trial scene wherein the various intrigues end and the characters are dismissed with light punishments.¹⁴ The tragicomic device employed in having the murderous assault of the villain Romelio upon the wounded Contarino perform a surgical operation that saves the latter's life, deserves to go on record with a similar absurdity in "A Wife for a Month," where a poison, instead of killing its victim, proves an effective cure for melancholy. Dekker's "Match Me in London" offers no new departures from the conventional features of Fletcherian tragicomedy: the lust of a monarch for a merchant's virtuous wife, and his final repentance, rewarded with the happy discovery that his supposedly murdered queen still lives. And the "Wonder of a Kingdom" of the same author, while equally a romantic play of foreign intrigue, is too closely welded to comedy to come within our scope.

With the chronicling of an insignificant tragicomedy of Robert Daborne, "The Poor-Man's Comfort,"¹⁵ assigned before 1613, and the anonymous "Dick of Devonshire,"¹⁶ whose

¹⁴ For this play, see E. E. Stoll, *John Webster* (1905), p. 175.

¹⁵ Reprinted in *Anglia* (1898), XXI.

¹⁶ Reprinted by Bullen from *Egerton MS. 1994*, in *Old Plays* (1883), Vol. II. Assigned by Fleay to Davenport, *Ibid.*, p. 4 n. With it should also be mentioned a yet unprinted play from the same manuscript: *The two noble ladies and the converted conjurer. . . . A trage-comicall historie oftentymes acted with approbation at the Red Bull in St. Johns Streete by the company of ye Reuells.* 1619-1622. Described in Bullen, *Old Plays*, II, 430; also *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum* (1854-1875), 1877, II, 941.

stirring adventure, sea-fights and English hero recall Heywood, we may conclude that by-way of our subject that has to do with the playwrights who belong more to the old order of the drama, and whose cultivation of tragicomedy is in response to current vogue and rather incidental to their main dramatic activity. Most of the tragicomedies that fall within this class show the influence of the type innovated and popularized by Fletcher and his collaborators; an influence most apparent perhaps in Heywood's "Royal King and Loyal Subject" and Middleton's "Witch." On the other hand, the old manner of tragicomic drama is preserved in the "Fair Maid of the West"; while such plays as the "English Traveller" and the "Witch of Edmonton" deserve special notice as illustrating the continued wide range of contemporary ideas of the *genre*. But such plays are the exceptions, and the main development of tragicomedy by the Caroline dramatists is directly along the lines established for it by Beaumont and Fletcher.

Massinger's collaborating hand has already been met with in a number of the tragicomedies of Fletcher, with whom he was closely associated during the first part of his career, and is marked by a seriousness of purpose and earnestness of tone, seen best perhaps in the "Lovers' Progress," differing far from the irresponsible manner of his master. We are now concerned with his unaided tragicomedies, written subsequent to Fletcher's death in 1625, in which he carried on the traditions of the type he had helped to popularize. As a disciple of the new school, in all forms of drama he continued to make use of the romantic material of popular vogue, with its court settings, its royalties and nobilities, and its themes of love and war. The bounds between the different species are accordingly not always clearly defined. Yet Massinger, writing alone, seems to have developed certain peculiarities of his art that unconsciously led to a finer distinction between the provinces of tragedy and tragicomedy than hitherto attained. His feeling that a tragic theme should be allowed its inevitable conclusion, his discrimination in moral values, his unwillingness to sacrifice character to stage effect, and his regard for poetic justice, led to a more or less definite boundary between

the themes and motives chosen for the two forms. The tragicomedies of Massinger are marked by a notable absence of villainy, murderous intent, and the darker passions of revenge and lust, all of which are confined to their proper sphere of tragedy. As a rule they are relatively tempered in motive and incident. We are treated to fewer thrilling escapes from the jaws of death, less violent contrasts and startling surprises, and a comparative dearth of repentant sinners, in marked contrast to the reckless profusion of Fletcher. Suspicion, jealousy, trials of chastity, and intrigue supply the tragic possibilities, which together with a background often of war and battle, and a style always exalted and grave, make up the determining characteristics of the author's unaided contribution to the species.

Of Massinger's extant plays, some eight serve to define the scope of his tragicomedy: "Renegado," "Picture," "Emperor of the East," "A Very Woman," "Bashful Lover," "Bondman," "Great Duke of Florence," and "Maid of Honor."¹⁷ All readily fall within the limits established for the form in the Fletcherian plays, ranging in intensity from the tragicomic norm to a type only distinguishable from comedy by gravity of tone. None, however, encroach on tragedy by admitting fatalities. True, Massinger's tragedies do not always end in the overwhelming catastrophe and unrelieved horror of popular prescription. The "Virgin Martyr" ends in death but celebrates a moral triumph. And "Believe as You List," whose action is devoid of bloodshed, would have been made by Fletcher into a tragicomedy, and the hero Antiochus not only vindicated in the end but saved. But such plays, if half tragedies perhaps, are definitely removed above tragicomedy, even of the type of the "Prophetess" and the "Two Noble Kinsmen." On the other hand, the demarcation of the type

¹⁷ Of these the first five appeared in quarto as tragicomedies between 1630 and 1655; the *Bondman* and *Maid of Honor* were left unclassified by the publisher, and the *Great Duke of Florence* was printed as a "Comickall Historie." Three of the lost plays of Massinger, *The Noble Choice*; or, *the Orator*, *Philenzo and Hippolita*, and *The Prisoner*; or, *The Fair Anchoress of Pausilippo*, all entered on the *Stationers' Register* in 1653, are also rated as tragicomedies.

from romantic comedy is not so convincing. The "Guardian," called a "Comical History," introduces one scene of tragic horror, but the play as a whole has little of the sustained seriousness of tragicomedy, and gives rather the effect of Fletcherian extravaganza. And the "Parliament of Love" likewise falls without the pale as too closely affiliated with comedy.

Of the tragicomedies, the "Bashful Lover," "A Very Woman" and the "Bondman" most nearly approach the manner of Fletcher in fullness of incident, profusion of tragic possibilities, and thrills and surprises. In all the dominant interest is a romantic love story, in which lovers, crossed by supposed inequality of rank are finally happily united by the discovery that the lowly hero is of noble birth. The bashful Hortensio turns out to be the Duke of Milan, the supposed slave Pedro is the disguised Prince of Tarent, and the Bondman Marullo is discovered to be Pisander, a noble of Thebes. Plotting and evil are conspicuously absent. Seriousness is supplied more by battles, duels, rescues and the like, and such dangers as result from the romantic course of events. The hero is always a person of high sentiment and conduct, whose patient devotion or reverential love for the lady of his heart renders his nobility more real and appealing than that usually encountered in contemporary romance. In the modest, chivalrous and self-sacrificing Hortensio, Massinger achieved his masterpiece of noble characterization. And the heroines, while less idealized, are of the type that rise to the occasion and eloquently declaim their determination to suffer the fate of their lovers.

The "Renegado" and the "Emperor of the East" also offer tragic situations, but are without the heroic, martial atmosphere of the "Bashful Lover" and the "Bondman" and the quick and violent action of "A Very Woman." They depend more on romantic intrigue and rise to a lower level of dignity in tone and event. In the "Emperor of the East," which the author himself denominated a tragicomedy, we have a play of relatively slight construction. The serious interest, arising from a trivial incident—the episode of the apple, concerns the Emperor's jealous suspicions of his wife and his

kinsman Paulinus, which cause him to sentence the latter to death before he discovers the groundlessness of his fears. The "Renegado" combines several stories into a single plot, in which the passion of the Turkish Princess Donusa for the Venetian Vitelli brings down the threatened disaster. The play thruout is strongly religious. Vitelli not only refuses to save his own life and that of the princess by renouncing his faith, but even converts her to Christianity, whereupon both are condemned to die. But the Jesuit, the good genius of the play, with the aid of the converted renegado, contrives their escape, and thus averts the tragedy.

Somewhat apart from the above five plays stand the "Picture," the "Great Duke of Florence" and the "Maid of Honor," also tragicomedies but of milder stamp. The essential distinction lies in the fact that in these plays, unlike the others, the action never at any time works up to a real tragic situation where life is actually imperilled. Yet the gravity of motive, serious purpose and weighty tone clearly exalt them above the level of comedy. They exemplify, then, a variation from the tempered form of the species noticed in the Fletcherian plays, where the coalescence of tragicomedy with comedy brought little abatement in tragic situations and possibilities but much in tone and spirit. Massinger had less of Fletcher's fondness for thrilling incident and extravaganza in tragicomedy, with the result that some of his plays depend almost wholly on a sustained seriousness of tone and purpose for their *genre* classification. Ford's contribution to tragicomedy consists in one or two plays of the same kind: notably the "Lover's Melancholy," which is equally free from violent action and danger of death, yet interweaves a treatment of madness with the romance of love, and presents other moods and emotions of serious drama. And something similar might be said for the "Lady's Trial."

In Massinger's three tragicomedies of this type, love continues to be the main theme and intrigue of one form or another the moving force. Jealousy and anger are aroused, virtue is tempted, a lover is faithless, but the action never takes a really tragic turn, and imprisonment is about the most

serious situation that arises. The double trial of chastity to which a husband and wife are subjected in the "Picture" to appease the whim of an ambitious queen has no grave consequences; and the anger of the Great Duke of Florence for the deceit practised upon him by his nephew and favorite is only momentarily threatening. The "Maid of Honor" deserves some special notice. While equally removed from tragic incident, it is more heroic and martial in tone than the others; the action transporting us from the court of Sicily to the seat of war, where Bertoldo, the preferred suitor of Camiola, the Maid of Honor, falls into captivity. His ransom, refused him by his brother the King, is furnished by the noble Camiola, whose loyal devotion he rewards by breaking faith with her and yielding to the importunities of the Duchess Aurelio, with whom he returns home to be wedded. But at the point of marriage the wronged heroine appears, discloses the faithlessness of her fickle lover, and so eloquently pleads her case that the Duchess resigns at once in her favor. At this point, however, instead of Camiola receiving the penitent Bertoldo back into grace, and the play closing in the conventional manner of tragicomedy, it is announced that she will have none of her lovers, as she has decided to marry into the church, and Bertoldo, by her command, resumes his knighthood of Malta with its vow of celibacy. Such an outcome, bloodless but unsatisfactory, renders the play more or less unique among the tragicomedies of the time. Yet it well illustrates Massinger's consistency of purpose in handling a serious motive that involves a moral question, and his refusal to sacrifice the principles of his art to the exigencies of the happy ending.

Some attention has been called to the relatively tempered tone of Massinger's tragicomedies from the Fletcherian type; their clearer differentiation from the realm of tragedy in motive and event; their greater regard for the laws of cause and effect; and their less dependence on constant thrills and sensational theatrical devices. In combining various threads of story in a single action and in originality of treatment, Massinger was as ingenious a playwright as his predecessor. But he had not the latter's mastery of technic in maintenance

of suspense and artful handling of the *dénouement*. Often the effect of his tragicomic drama is considerably lessened by some device or other that foreshadows, if it does not betray, the character of the outcome. For example, we know from the start the noble blood of the Bondman and the identity of the disguised Prince of Tarent, so that in each case the execution that threatens them in the end for having won the love of ladies of rank is felt to be already averted by our foreknowledge of the coming disclosures of their noble birth. Fletcher would have contrived in some way to conceal their identity until the end, and thus enhance the effect of the *dénouement*. Similarly, the magnanimity of Lorenzo to the Princess Matilda in the "Bashful Lover" presages the happy outcome of all the difficulties; the rescue which saves the condemned in the "Renegado" is explained beforehand, so that the announcement of its success comes as no surprise; and the happy clue regarding the fates of the two culprits in the "Great Duke of Florence" is already in the possession of the spectators before the final scene when they are officially pardoned by the magnanimous Duke. Only occasionally in his tragicomedies does Massinger effect a telling surprise that recalls his master's skill. In the "Emperor of the East," when the jealous monarch has learned the falsity of his suspicions and is bitterly repenting the execution of his kinsman, the man in question turns up alive to set the final seal of happiness on the reconciliation. And the sudden and unexpected outcome given the "Maid of Honor" must have startled even a Caroline audience. But if less a master of effective tragicomedy than his early contemporary, Massinger's more careful art as a dramatist seems to have led him to a clearer idea of the nature of the species as a type that should be medial between tragedy and comedy, strictly detached from the horrors and deaths of the former, and lifted above the humor and extravagance of the latter. In this respect, his consistency is in marked contrast to the carelessness of most of his contemporaries.

From Massinger to Shirley the transition is easy and natural. The work of the last great figure among the later Elizabethans is a direct continuation of the traditions established by his

masterly predecessors. His dramatic career beginning approximately with the death of Fletcher in 1625 and ending with the closing of the theaters, covers a period of the very heyday of English tragicomedy. It is not surprising, then, that Shirley's best and most characteristic work, like that of his masters and contemporaries, lies in this type of drama. His contribution to the form, representing about a third of his whole dramatic output, adds little that is new to that of Fletcher and Massinger. He was the close student of both, combining the delight in thrills and complicated plots of the former with something of the latter's moral tone and love of poetic justice. Moreover, tragicomedy by this time, tho always a variable quantity fluctuating over a wide area, was becoming more or less conventionalized in materials and treatment, like the drama in general. Love in one form or another is almost invariably the chief interest, interwoven with war, usurpation or villainous intrigue. The characters are the recurring court types of the romantic dukedoms that border the Mediterranean. And the plot is an ingenious affair, usually perfectly artificial, but cleverly manipulated to bring about whatever happy ending the exigencies of the situation demand.

Thus it is that little distinguishes Shirley's tragicomedy from what has gone before. A court is always prominent, and the villainous intrigues, amorous entanglements and threatened usurpations that take place within it have a general sameness to others of the kind. In the "Duke's Mistress," "Royal Master," "Court Secret" and "Coronation," the action is almost wholly confined within the gates of a single palace. The "Imposture" encompasses both the court of Mantua and that of Ferrara. A sub-plot supplies the usual court interest in the "Gentlemen of Venice," while the main action centers on a repellent theme of Italian domestic life. And court intrigue is combined with war and conquest in the "Young Admiral" and the "Doubtful Heir."

Unlike Massinger, Shirley put no curb on the bounds of tragicomedy. The line of demarcation separating the form from his tragedies and comedies is even more purely arbitrary than in the Fletcherian plays. Theoretical distinctions of

genres played little part in his dramatic creed; and while some of his plays were published as tragicomedies during his lifetime,¹⁸ never in prefatory matter or elsewhere does he himself betray any critical interest in the form. Tragicomic elements, accordingly, continue to appear in his comedies, as the "Example" and the curious medley called "St. Patrick for Ireland" illustrate; and, on the other hand, his tragedies occasionally show the popular tendency to limit the catastrophe to the vicious and allow the good to live, conforming, in a way, to the second kind of tragedy chronicled by Aristotle as the most appealing to popular taste. To class the "Duke's Mistress" among tragicomedies and the "Politician" among tragedies, may seem to be drawing an artificial distinction. Yet in the last named, death claims an innocent victim as well as the guilty, and the happy union of the hero and heroine at the end seems subordinated to the tragic downfall of evil. The "Duke's Mistress," on the contrary, allots death only to the two evil spirits of the piece, and offers a conventional tragicomic character cast and theme. The lustful monarch, ill-used queen, villainous favorite, intriguing courtier, honest soldier, and faithful lovers are all there; while the plot parallels that of Dekker's "Match Me in London," and is reminiscent of a multitude of other tragicomedies. The double ending of the rewards for the virtuous and punishment of the wicked is again strikingly exemplified in the "General," if, indeed, the manuscript production of that title, with its non-descript setting and rimed verse, is correctly attributed to Shirley.¹⁹ An action of war and lust and usurpation, mingled with romance, seems to have culminated in a series of bloody tragedies; but surprises are in store, and when we have recovered from the final shocks, we discern that the play is really a tragicomedy: that the wicked usurper and his intriguing son alone have not been recalled to life, while the rightful monarch has

¹⁸ The following appeared as tragicomedies: *Doubtful Heir* (1652), *Imposture* (1652), *Court Secret* (1653), and the *Gentleman of Venice* (1655).

¹⁹ *The General: A Tragi-Comedy*. Reprinted from MS. by Halliwell, *A Brief Description of the Ancient & Modern Manuscripts . . . Plymouth Library*, 1853. See Fleay, II, 244, 340; Dyce ed. of Shirley, VI, 495; also Gosse, Mermaid ed. of Shirley, p. xxvii, note.

been restored, the heroine united to the suitor of her choice, and the valiant General—tho rejected as a lover—compensated with a high commission and sent off to new conquests.

/ In quick changes of fortune and extravagant theatrical effects, Shirley's tragicomedies are quite comparable to those of his master Fletcher. No better example of the extreme use of reverse and surprise is afforded than by the "Doubtful Heir." The hero is first condemned to die and next exalted to the kingship with a frequency that takes our breath away. Three several times do his fortunes undergo this double change before his grasp on the throne is finally secure and the happy ending sealed with a double marriage. In the "Young Admiral" we witness a moral conflict that recalls Massinger. Vittorio, taken captive with his betrothed by the Sicilians, is confronted with the problem of choosing between treason and the death of his beloved. In great distress he resolves on treason, only to learn from the other side that the first assault against his native city means the death of his father. In this play and in others the dangers are removed and happy ending perfected with an astonishing ingenuity. A second love theme, in which the Princess of Sicily is the heroine, so works that the Young Admiral is freed from his dilemmas, and out of jealousy, suspicion and threatened war come reconciliation, the union of lovers and peace.

/ Characteristic of Shirley's tragicomedies are the elaborate complications of the plot, usually carried to the limits of improbability. Confusion of identity, disguise, and any device calculated to complicate matters, are cultivated to the full. Identity is intentionally misrepresented in the "Imposture," and an intriguer's mistress is palmed off as a princess. In the "Court Secret" the tangled love chain, in which three pairs of brothers and sisters love awry thru no fault of theirs, is worthy of the most complicated Arcadian pastoral. And so cleverly contrived is the plot that on the disclosure of the court secret, which establishes the true relations among the lovers and averts the dangers, the elaborate love tangle straightens out of its own accord. The interchange of children in infancy, which underlies the complication of this play,

is also employed in the sub-plot of the "Gentleman of Venice." A disclosure of birth gains the Doubtful Heir his title to the throne; and the involved plot of the "Coronation" turns on the discovery of the rightful identity of two princes, the supposed lost brothers of the Queen. Such are some of the stock situations employed repeatedly by Shirley to perfect tragicomic plots that will unravel easily when the proper state of threatening complications has been reached. They show his clever craftsmanship as well as the conventionalized state of the drama, now no longer seeking novelty in theme and treatment but content to follow as fashion had pointed the way.

With Shirley we reach the last important link in the direct development of romantic tragicomedy that starts with the innovation of Beaumont and Fletcher and temporarily ceases with the closing of the theaters in 1642. The numerous tragicomedies written by minor playwrights during the latter years of this period only further emphasize the fairly well-defined outlines of the *genre* in the reign of Charles I and its pre-eminence on the popular stage. Davenant, Carlell, Cartwright and Thomas Killigrew, all of whom cultivated the form almost exclusively, stand forth as the chief contributors among the lesser lights, and individual pieces scattered among a host of others help to swell the total output of Caroline tragicomedy. Numerically, these plays present quite a formidable array; but the large majority follow the way pointed by precedent and move within the relatively restricted limits of settled convention.

Similarities in motive, character and situation abound, whether the scene is the usual Italian principality, a remote Eastern court, or transferred to ancient Britain or Scandinavia, or the plot revamped from Spanish novel, French romance or ancient history. Only along the line of theatrical effectiveness is there no sign of stagnation. The dramaturgy of tragicomedy had now become an art on which each writer lavished his best endeavor to the neglect of all else. The most absurd and insignificant play is not without technical dexterity; and many outdo Fletcher's tragicomedies in artfully concealed *dénouement*, startling discoveries, and succession of final surprises.

Noticeable in all is the influence of the social and literary forces dominant at the court of Charles I. Fashionable English society was aping the cults and affectations of French preciosity; and the vogue of the interminable French romance had set in across the channel, with its heroic ideals, artificial sentiment, and impossible heroes and heroines. Tragicomedy readily lent itself to current fashions, particularly in the hands of writers closely identified with the court. In the "Platonic Lovers," a tragicomedy of little action and much disputation, Davenant gave dramatic treatment to the fashionable cult of court circles; while love casuistry and absurd disquisitions over honor and friendship reappear constantly in the plays of others. The popular fondness for romance long drawn out seems to have induced Carlell to extend two of his tragicomedies, "Arviragus and Philicia" and the "Passionate Lovers," over two parts—a custom later employed by the equally verbose Killigrew. Gough's "Strange Discovery" dramatizes the rambling story of "Theagenes and Clariclea" of Heliodorus, which Hardy in France had earlier extended over eight tragicomedies of five acts each. And the popularity of the heroic fiction of the day is easily the inspiration for the large majority of these less known plays. Love and honor and friendship are always uppermost; heroes and heroines display the most extravagant and unnatural nobility of sentiment; rival suitors contend in magnanimity and generosity; love is sacrificed for friendship; constancy is put to strange tests; and no limit is set to marvelous adventure and astounding *dénouement*.

Some few, indeed, do not follow the formula of heroic romance but lean rather to realism. Davenant's "Just Italian," Davenport's "City Night-Cap," and the "Twins" of William Rider, belong with Shirley's "Gentleman of Venice" as tragicomedies of Italian domestic life, and vie with one another in the repellency of their themes. And the "Distresses" of Davenant is of yet different cast, recalling Spanish drama in its rapid action, frequent duels, adventures and complications. A few others are anomalies that will call for mention later; but the prevailing type is as directly the descen-

dent of Beaumont and Fletcher romance as it is the forbear of the heroic play of the Restoration.

Both Davenant and Killigrew wrote tragicomedies after the closing of the theaters as well as before, their work thus forming an interesting link between the old and the new. The precursory heroic ideal of Restoration drama is shown to best advantage perhaps in the former's three tragicomedies of the "Siege," "Fair Favorite" and "Love and Honor." In the first named, a hero who has committed treason for love is goaded by the scorn of his noble mistress to fight with such blind fury in expiation of his crime that besieged Pisa falls, and he is restored to honor and rewarded with his lady's hand. In the "Fair Favorite" the heroic ideal works a novel variation on the well-worn tragicomic theme of the lustful tyrant and virtuous maiden. The king's base passion is exalted to a high and ideal love; and the neglected queen, instead of the imperious and bitterly resentful woman, is a meek and humble Grissel, bent on resigning in favor of her fair rival. But extreme nobility and lofty sentiment, together with remarkable tragicomic technic, are best exemplified in Davenant's early masterpiece, which well merited the praise of Richard Flecknoe:

In 's Love and Honor you might see
The height of tragedie-comedy.²⁰

As often, the action follows in the wake of war. The Duke of Savoy has humbled the Duke of Milan, and among the captives is the latter's daughter Evandra, who is decreed to die in retaliation for the supposed slaying of the Duke of Savoy's brother by the enemy. Her three lovers combine to conceal her from the angry vengeance of the Duke, and vie with one another in chivalric devotion and determination to die in her stead. But she is not to be outdone in magnanimity. By a ruse she contrives to escape their vigilance and gives herself up to execution, only to find that her faithful companion Melora is claiming her identity. The result is that both ladies are condemned to die. At the climax, which is remarkable

²⁰ *Sir William D'Avenant's Voyage to the other World, with his Adventures in the Poet's Elisium* (1668).

even for tragicomedy, amid the succession of magnanimous offers and surprising discoveries, tragic fate slips from one victim to another until by the final disclosure that the Duke's brother still lives it is dissipated entirely, and everyone appeased in the reconciliation.

Rivalry in generosity again comes to the fore in William Habington's "Queen of Aragon," a tragicomedy of like heroic tone, with a background of war and a foreground of love and honor. Extreme devotion which remains unaltered under the most severe tests is shown in the anonymous "Queen, or Excellency of Her Sex"²¹ and Glapthorne's "Lady's Privilege." In the latter, the hero is commanded by his mistress not only to renounce his own suit but to secure her the love of his friend, all of which he faithfully performs. A duel of honor occurs; love is sacrificed for friendship by the devoted comrade; the usual execution is stayed; and the *dénouement* brings a series of surprises, among them the disclosure by the now humbled heroine that her heartless conduct has all been a ruse to test her lover's devotion.²² In Carlell's four tragicomedies the constancy of love and the ideality of friendship are carried to the limits of heroic romance, strange adventure abounds, and tragicomic devices are multiplied in the elaborately planned *dénouements*. In the "Fool Would be a Favorite," which like Davenport's "City Night-Cap" takes its name from the comic sub-plot, a novel effect is secured by the supposedly slain hero personating his own ghost—a device resorted to by the heroine in Berkeley's "Lost Lady." The "Deserving Favorite,"²³ Carlell's best tragicomedy, offers a series of paragons of virtue—heroes afflicted with the most sensitive honor and heroines no less idealized—and in contrast an "honest Jacomo," more confessedly a villain than Richard III and blacker than Iago. Forest scenes and a sentimental heroine in page attire recall "Philaster"; but in general the play offers nothing

²¹ Reprinted by Bang, *Materialien zur Kunde des alteren Englischen Dramas* (1906), vol. 13. The play has been assigned to Ford, cp. S. P. Sherman in *Mod. Lang. Notes* (1908), XXIII, 245.

²² Glapthorne is also the author of a non-extant *Noble Tryal* (S. R. 1660), which is recorded as a tragicomedy.

²³ Edited with introduction by C. H. Gray (Dissertation, Chicago), 1905.

distinctive over other villain tragicomedies. The action culminates in the usual scene of impending execution, and the disclosures which convert the "Scène of blood into a Scène of joy" are of long-standing familiarity. The ax is stayed by the emergence from disguise of the character whose supposed death is about to be expiated. Other disclosures and lengthy explanations reveal that the lovers are brother and sister, which of course solves a love difficulty; a hermit turns out to be their banished father in disguise; and a wicked uncle is discovered in the villain. To these should be added the two extant plays of Arthur Wilson, the "Swisser"²⁴ and the "Inconstant Lady,"²⁵ both tragicomedies of the approved patterns, offering a full quota of disguises, sleeping-potion poisons, thwarted intrigue, penitent villains, discoveries of identity, and like measures devised to effect telling tragicomic conclusions. Playwrights had learned the theatrical value of saving every surprise for the *dénouement*; and in this respect, the tragicomedies of minor writers often far surpass those of their masters.

The contribution of Cartwright and Killigrew to tragicomedy also follows the conventionalized mould of heroic romance. Both men were staunch royalists, the former a scholar and the latter a court wit, and both were writers of distinction in their own day. Cartwright was numbered among the sons of Ben; he was connected all his life with Oxford, where his most celebrated tragicomedy, the "Royal Slave," was presented with much pomp before the King and Queen in August, 1636. He evidently wrote but four plays, three of which are tragicomedies,²⁶ and to judge from the mass of fulsome panegyric poems that accompany the posthumous edition of 1651, they were immensely popular with his literary contemporaries. In addition to the "Royal Slave," the tragicomedies are the "Lady Errant" and the "Siege; or Love's Convert," all of

²⁴ Edited from MS. by Albert Feuillerat, Paris, 1904.

²⁵ Printed from MS. by P. Bliss, Oxford, 1814.

²⁶ Cartwright's dramatic preference is noticed in a commendatory poem by a certain "I. B.":

No bloody drops did from thy Pencill fall,
Thy blackest Scean's but Tragi-comicall.

which have a general sameness in character and little beside the author's fantastic style to distinguish them from other tragicomic treatments of romantic themes. Similarly, three of the four plays of Killigrew that fall within this period are tragicomedies, "The Prisoners," "Claricilla" and the "Princess," all in prose, and the last two written during a tour of the author abroad. Their distinctive trait is melodramatic excess. In violent action, strained sentiment and impossible adventure, they easily outdo anything attempted by others, concealing poverty in all else by wild extravagance. Bloodshed and fighting suffuse the action; the villains usually meet death; heroes repeatedly suffer wounds that heal readily; and the stage may be strewn with the corpses of soldiers and bravos. In comparison, the tragicomedies of the scholarly Cartwright are relatively subdued, relying more on rhetorical disquisition and spectacular effects, and less on tumultuous action and strange adventure. But the differences are in degree and not in kind, for the inspiration of both writers is the same—the heroic fiction of the Caroline era.

To conclude the account of later Elizabethan tragicomedy, it remains to mention briefly certain minor and anomalous forms of the species that fall rather without our main discussion. In academic circles tragicomedy in both vernacular and Latin was cultivated from time to time. On the occasion of the royal visit to Oxford in 1636, when Cartwright's "Royal Slave" was first presented, the students of Christ Church also performed for the King's entertainment the "Floating Island," by William Strode, Public Orator at Oxford, another university tragicomedy but utterly different from its companion piece.²⁷ The "Floating Island" is an allegorical masque, the characters of which are all abstractions, and the action ominously symbolic of the strained political state of affairs of Charles' kingdom. That the piece appeared under the *genre* name is doubtless due to the fact that the climax and *dénouement* of the slow-moving allegory are obviously adapted from current tragicomedy. The "Amorous War" is likewise the work of an Oxford scribe, Jasper Mayne, and recalls the artificial struc-

²⁷ Recently reprinted by B. Dobell, *Poetical Works of Strode*, 1907.

ture and disquisitional style of Cartwright's "Lady Errant." Two of the Latin plays of William Drury, a Jesuit Professor of Rhetoric at Douay, also bear the title name. "Alvredus sive Alfredus" is a "Tragico-Comœdia" dealing with King Alfred's deliverance of England from the Danes, and, according to the title, was acted three times by the youth of the English college at Douay in 1619; and the first part of a "Reparatus sive Depositum, Tragico-Comœdia" followed in 1628.²⁸ At least two other academic plays of this period inaccessible in manuscript are chronicled as tragicomedies: the Latin "Pseudomagia"²⁹ by William Mewe of Cambridge, and the "Warde,"³⁰ an Oxford production in vernacular by Thomas Neale, dated September 16, 1637.³¹

Certain of the Caroline pastorals were also denominated tragicomedies in their own day, following the precedent established in England by Daniel and Fletcher. The "Careless Shepherdess" of Thomas Goffe, the Oxford preacher, and Joseph Rutter's "Shepherds' Holiday"—both of which were represented at Whitehall—are elaborate Arcadian tragicomedies, which rehabilitate conventional materials and carry on the traditions of English pastoralism that descend from Guarini. And a short pastoral skit by Joseph Tatham, called "Love Crowns the End," acted "by the scholles of Bingham" in Nottingham, 1632, appeared in the second edition of 1657 as a "Tragi-Comedy." Among unacted plays of the period is the "Adrasta," a "Tragi-comedie" by John Jones of purely conventional design; and the "Governour" of Sir Cornelius Formido, entered in the Court Revels as presented at St. James, February 16, 1636, was evidently never printed. An interesting indication of the popularity of tragicomedy is afforded by the stage history of Suckling's "Aglaura," which first appeared as a conventional tragedy at Christmas time 1636,

²⁸ See H. R. Duthilloeul, *Bibl. Douaisienne* (1842), p. 63.

²⁹ *Shakspeare Jahrbuch*, XXXIV, 317.

³⁰ *MS. Rawl. Poet*, 79, Bodleian Library.

³¹ It will be remembered that the old Oxford *Bellum Grammaticale* appeared in print for the first time in 1635, and as a *Tragico-Comœdia*. Above, p. 88.

and the following Easter was accommodated with a new fifth act, in which the wholesale deaths are all averted and the play transformed into a tragicomedy—a concession, the courtly author explains, to the ladies, “whom to see a lover die, it grieves.” Of no integral relation to the species is Sir Aston Cokayne’s “Trappolin Creduto Principe,” which, tho styled an “Italian Trage-Comedy,” founded, as the author admits, on a piece he had seen in Venice, is really a pure farce and hardly more than a translation of the Italian play of the same name.³² To conclude the list of extant irregular productions associated with Caroline tragicomedy by documentary evidence, the “Langartha”³³ of Henry Burnell, acted at Dublin in 1639, may be mentioned; a play chiefly interesting here for the critical comment it called from the author, in reply to detractors, that “a Tragic-Comedy sho’d neither end Comically or Tragically, but betwixt both,” one of the very few expressions of the sort that the period affords.

The almost total absence of critical notice of tragicomedy during a period when it was the prevailing dramatic type is not so surprising when we consider that the drama of these years was practically without a guiding criticism. After Ben Jonson, dramatic theory had no English expositor until the Restoration; and so far as tragicomedy is concerned, Sidney was the last to issue a critical pronunciamiento. Fletcher, indeed, early in his career formulated a definition for the form from Guarini; but none of his imitators ever manifested a similar interest in critical theory. Thruout the period there appears to have been no echo in England of the discussion that followed in the wake of the Spanish national drama, or of that in France growing out of the appearance of Corneille’s “Cid” as a tragicomedy, altho the play itself was straightway translated and acted across the channel.³⁴ In England the

³² See T. Wilkes, *A General View of the Stage* (1759), p. 61.

³³ Reprinted in Baldwyn, *Old English Drama* (1824). For stage history, see *History of Dublin* (1854), I, 41.

³⁴ *The Cid, A Tragi comedy, out of French made English*, Joseph Rutter, first part, 1637; second part, 1640. It seems also that tragicomedies figured among contemporary French plays presented in England about this time by French players. See W. J. Lawrence, *Early French Players in England*, Anglia (1909). XXXII, 69.

form developed without the aid or hindrance of critical dicta, and thrived in response to an ever increasing demand for the thrills, melodramatic extravagance and happy endings that it only could supply, until by the closing of the theaters romantic tragicomedy had well nigh elbowed other forms off the stage.

Due to this lack of critical interest and to the little attention paid distinctions of dramatic kinds, only rarely do playwrights indicate in preface or prolog that the play in hand is a tragicomedy. Our ideas, therefore, of the extent to which the *genre* name was in current use must be based on data furnished by title pages and other kindred sources. Of the approximate hundred surviving plays that make up the sum of English tragicomedy from 1610 to 1642, almost two thirds offer documentary evidence of some sort of their contemporary recognition as tragicomedies. And with few exceptions, the others, if they appeared in quarto,³⁵ were left without any classification, as indicative of a neutral type. These facts demonstrate pretty clearly the general consistency in the current conception of tragicomedy, and its accord with the artificial bounds established for the form in the preceding pages. Many were not published at all until the period of the Commonwealth; and only during the dozen years preceding the closing of the theaters did tragicomedies begin to be generally indicated on the title pages of printed quartos. At this time the form was becoming more and more conventionalized and more definitely differentiated from tragedy and comedy—as evidenced most clearly in minor writers—with the natural result of the more general application of the title name. And altho occasional inconsistencies still appear at a late date,³⁶ the closing years of the period witness practical unanimity in the recognition of tragicomedy by name as well as the definite severance of the type from other forms of drama.

The extent to which contemporary foreign example may

³⁵ No pre-Restoration folios included tragicomedies in their divisions.

³⁶ For example, the three plays of Richard Brome, *Love-sick Court*, *Queens' Exchange*, and *Queen and Concubine*, which follow the mould of contemporary tragicomedy, tho not detached from the author's exuberant comic vein, came from the press as "Comedies," 1657-59.

have directly influenced English tragicomedy of this period is probably negligible. Pastoral tragicomedy, indeed, was an Italian importation, and its introduction into England doubtless of considerable historical importance to our subject; but the type itself enjoyed only a sporadic existence, all it had to offer being quickly assimilated by its more vigorous sister growth. And both the Spanish "Celestina"³⁷ and the "Cid" are among translations of the time. But a more intrinsic dependence on continental precedent is hard to establish; altho French tragicomedy of the romantic type which conquered the Parisian stage in the time of Hardy had hardly abated in popularity by 1642, and the Cloak and Sword drama of Lope and Calderon was an even more vigorous growth on the Spanish peninsula. True, much of the spirit of the Spanish national drama is embodied in the work of Fletcher and others; and the same pseudo-romance of French tragicomedy is the underlying inspiration for many Caroline dramatists. But English tragicomedies, while preserving many traits of foreign extraction, are rarely traceable to continental originals. Playwrights, when they did not invent their tragicomic plots entirely, turned to fiction rather than drama for material and found in the romantic stories of Spain, Italy, France and Greece an inexhaustible variety of sources from which to dress anew their favorite motives and situations.

Later Elizabethan tragicomedy, then, is to be thought of as an offspring of the *drame libre*, a spontaneous and natural evolution, and as much a national product, knowing no guiding criticism but popular taste, as its sister growths in France and Spain. Its direct development from the innovation of Beaumont and Fletcher, the revivers of the romantic tradition in the English drama, to Davenant and Killigrew, the precursors of Restoration drama, is along one pretty well-defined highway, whose characteristics, constant and variable, have been set forth above. The bypaths noted from time to time, which include pastorals, domestic and realistic dramas, aca-

³⁷ *The Spanish Bawd represented in Celestina Or, the Tragicke-Comedy of Calisto and Melibea*, translated by James Mabbe (Don Diego Puede-ser), 1631.

demic plays, and various anomalies, are only to be expected from a *genre* of such uncertain dimensions and composite ancestry. The main course follows the leading tradition of its own past—the romantic play of serious interest and happy ending—and leaves an ever widening track from its first real inception at the beginning of the century to its temporary cessation in 1642.

CHAPTER VI

THE DECLINE OF TRAGICOMEDY (1642 to 1700)

The interregnum in dramatic activity caused by the repression of the theaters during the civil war and Commonwealth is not to be regarded as a period totally detached from interest in the drama. Altho acting was under the ban and the chief playwrights were exiles in Europe, the drama was far from dead, as is evidenced by continued dramatic composition, the printing of old plays, private performances, the resort to puppet-shows or drolls, and the readiness of the regular drama to break forth on the slightest opportunity. In such ways the theatrical traditions of the past were kept alive in spite of hostile legislation, so that the Restoration in 1660 and the granting of the first patents for licensing theatrical companies found the old drama little impaired in vitality, and still the most potent influence in shaping the new drama to the changed conditions and society of the England of Charles II.

Tragicomedy during this interval of closed theaters found a vent for its interrupted popularity chiefly in publication. Denied expression on the stage, it met with a ready welcome from the reading public. During the suppression of the theaters no less than forty tragicomedies of the earlier period appeared in print for the first time, including almost all the Fletcherian group—which first saw the light in the 1647 folio—and many by Massinger, Shirley, Cartwright, Carlell, and a host of others. Moreover, plays of the type still continued to be produced by banished court wits and other royalist adherents who wrote for private circulation or surreptitious performance. Apparently tragicomedies even figured in the abortive attempts to reopen the theaters during the Commonwealth. On February 5, 1648, John Evelyn witnessed “a tragie-comedy acted in the Cockpit, after there had ben none of these diver-

sions for many years during the warr."¹ And one of the later infractions of the act of suppression has a curious interest here. It seems that on the occasion of a performance by vagrant players in 1653 of the old play of "Mucedorus" in the country town of Whitney, an accident occurred that killed some and injured many others. John Rowe, a Puritan Lecturer from Oxford, who saw in the disaster the hand of Nemesis, records the happening in a pamphlet which he entitled "Tragi-Comœdia," evidently by reason of the tragical consequences visited upon the performance of a comedy.²

This pamphlet use of the title name is a distinct innovation that sprang up during the troubled times when England was torn in civil strife. Following the dissensions between King and Parliament and the ascendancy of Cromwell to power, there was a general upgrowth of political and personal lampoons, usually by anonymous authors who championed the royalist cause and took this means of heaping scurrilous abuse upon the Roundheads. Not a few of these libels were couched in dramatic form, and for some reason or other usually settled on the name of tragicomedy to denote their type.³ The earliest political squib of this sort is the work of Richard Braithwait, who produced in 1641 a prose piece in four short acts called "Mercurius Britannicus, or The English Intelligencer," described on the title as "A Tragic-Comedy, at Paris. Acted

¹ *Memoirs*, I, 391. There is also record of an attempted performance of *King and No King* at Salisbury Court sometime in 1647. Fleay, *History of the Stage*, p. 365; Ward, III, 278.

² To continue the title: *Being a Brief Relation of the Strange and Wonderfull hand of God discovered at Witny, in the Comedy Acted there February the Third, where there were some slaine, many hurt, with severall other Remarkable Passages. Together with what was preached in three Sermons on that occasion from Rom. I. 18. Both which may serve as some Check to the growing Atheisme of the Present Age. By John Rowe of C. C. C. in Oxford, Lecturer in the Towne of Witny. Oxford, 1653.* See Collier, II, 118; Ward, III, 281 n.

³ Occasionally, it seems, as in the case of the Puritan tract of Rowe cited above, pamphlets without dramatic form were given the *genre* name. Another instance of the same is a Latin satirical poem by the Rev. Adam Littleton, written to ridicule the proceedings of the parliamentary visitors appointed in 1647 for the visitation of Oxford, entitled *Tragi-Comœdia Oxoniensis*, 1648(?).

with great Applause." A sub-heading which reads, "The Censure of the Judges; or The Court Cure," betrays the nature of the piece, which, despite its dramatic externals, is only a royalist attack on the political transactions and personages of the eventful period ushering in the civil war, and was never intended for presentation.⁴ The later half-dozen or more pamphlet tragi-comedies of the period are rather less pretentious and evidently the work of men of inferior genius. Usually the title is sufficient to reveal the nature of the brief contents of these pseudo-dramas, which—whether religious, personal or political—are all virulently anti-Puritan. The Commonwealth party in general and Presbyterianism in particular are the butts of abuse in a print of 1647, called "The Scottish Politick Presbyter, Slain by an English Independent";⁵ while the "Presbyterian Lash: or, Noctroffs Maid whipt,"⁶ is a coarse personal satire on Zackary Crofton, a non-conformist divine, who was prosecuted for whipping his maid-servant and had the temerity to print a defense of his action.⁷ Others were frankly seditious, such as "Craftie Cromwell," in two parts (1648), written respectively by "Mercurius Melancholicus" and "Mercurius Pragmaticus,"⁸ and

⁴ There also exists an undated Latin edition of this piece, for which see *Appendix*. Some years later the ready pen of the same author produced another royalist pamphlet of the same sort, dealing—as the title declares—with the murder of Charles I: *Tragi-Comædia, Cui in Titulum inscribitur Regicidium*, etc., 1665. For full title see *Appendix*.

⁵ *The Scottish Politick Presbyter, Slain by an English Independent: Or; the independents victory over the presbyterian party. The rigour of the Scotch government, their conniving and bribing; the lewdness and debauchery of elders in secret. A tragi-comedy, 1647.* Reprinted in the *Harleian Miscellany*, VI, 80.

⁶ *The Presbyterian Lash: or, Noctroffs Maid whipt. A Tragy-comedy As it was lately acted in the great roome at the Pye Tavern at Algate. By Noctroffe the Priest, and severall his parishioners at the eating of a chine of beefe. The first part. London. Printed for the use of Mr. Noctroffs friends. 1661.* Supposed to be the work of Francis Kirkman, the book-seller, from the fact that the dedication bears the initials "K. F."

⁷ Kennett, *Register and Chronicle* (1728), p. 797.

⁸ *Craftie Cromwell, Or, Oliver ordering our New State. A tragi-comedic. Wherein is discovered the trayterous undertakings and proceedings of the*

likewise the two parts of the "Tragi-Comedy, called New-Market-Fayre,"⁹ of the following year, in which the Protector and Fairfax were again coarsely satirized and abused; while the last "tragicomedy" of the sort of which there is record is a "Cromwell's Conspiracy," printed in 1660.¹⁰

There is little to be said of these productions, and of course their only interest here is in the use of the title name. They are all of a type, arranged in five short acts of prose and doggerel, abusive in tone, and potently reflective of the hatred of the loyalists for the Puritans. In the political libels, the traitorous proceedings of the rebels are exposed and arraigned, and their leaders ridiculed and always shown as coming to grief at the end. Cromwell and Fairfax are of course the chief objects of attack; they are represented as possessed with devils, reviled and lampooned in every way, and their wives come in for even more indecent ribaldry. That the name of tragicomedy proved a popular label for this particular brand of literature is probably due to the mock nature of the contents. A burlesque of state affairs arranged in dramatic form would perhaps most naturally suggest the composite term of tragicomedy especially in an age when that particular species was a popular form of drama. At any rate, the pamphlet tragicomedy, which came into being during the era of closed theaters, is interesting as adding one to the many uses that the

Said Nol, and his levelling crew. Written by Mercurius Melancholicus. Printed in the yeare, 1648.

The Second part of Crafty Cromwell; or Oliver in his glory as king. A Trage Comedie Wherein is presented, the late treasonable undertakings, and proceedings, of the Rebels, their murthering of Capt. Burley, with their underhand workings to betray their King. Written by Marcurius Pragmaticus. London, Printed in the yeare, 1648.

⁹ *A Tragi-Comedy, called New-Market-Fayre, or a Parliament Out-Cry: of State-Commodities, set to sale. Printed at you may goe look. 1649.*

The Second Part of the Tragi-Comedy, Called New-Market-Fayre, Or Mrs. Parliaments New Figaryes. Written by the Man in the Moon. Printed at You may goe look. 1649.

¹⁰ *Cromwell's Conspiracy. A tragy-comedy, relating to our latter times. Beginning at the death of King Charles the First, and ending with the happy restauration of King Charles the Second. Written by a Person of Quality. London. 1660.*

title name had been called upon to serve in the past. Its next appearance belongs to a later period of troubled politics.

But we need not look to pamphlets or to the publication of old plays for the sole manner in which tragicomedy is associated with the period of the Commonwealth. Dramatic composition did not entirely cease for lack of a public stage; and the fact that tragicomedy which had so lately conquered the theaters continued to have its disciples is evidenced by the really remarkable number of such plays that fall between 1642 and the Restoration. All were the work of loyalists, patrons of poetry who found time to cultivate the drama even in "this tragical age, when the theater hath been so much out-acted." None were presented, at least not publicly; and while most are of slight merit, they have a little historical interest. Some of these pieces are to be found among the literary diversions with which banished royalists occasionally sought to while away the tedium of exile. Of this nature are two ten-act tragicomedies, "Bellamira" and "Cicilia and Clorinda," which came from the pen of "Tom" Killigrew while official Resident for Charles II in Venice, 1651. These romantic effusions—the latter of which borrows from the "Grand Cyrus"—are of the same harrowing type of the author's earlier tragicomedies. Princesses are in distress and villains pursue until the latter are killed and the former married to the princes of their choice, altho "Cicilia and Clorinda" even ends half tragically for the lovers. Similarly, two of the productions of Sir William Lower, another exiled patron of the drama who employed his leisure in literary pursuits are tragicomedies, altho not original compositions. "The Noble Ingratitude," which styles itself a "Pastoral-Tragi-Comedy," and "The Amorous Fantasmie" are taken from the French of Phillippe Quinault, and both were printed at the Hague, 1659 and 1660, where Lower had taken service in the household of Mary of Orange during the Commonwealth.

Other ardent loyalists of the time of little note as poets kept alive the old conventional type of romantic drama with tragicomedies in which loyal sentiment is notably prominent. A certain Cosmo Manuche, an Italian who served as major in

the army of Charles I, wrote two plays, both of this type, and took little pains to disguise his political affiliations. "The Loyal Lovers" (1652), in fact, is meant for contemporary application, satirizing the adherents of the local government in the knaves and rascals of the comic plot; while the romantic characters—the loyal lovers and their friends—are represented as champions of the King's cause.¹¹ Again, Manuche's other play, the "Just General" (1650), shows the faithful loyalty of Bellicosus, who steadily refuses to accede to popular clamor and mount the throne which his young king has deserted to go in pursuit of a lost mistress. Otherwise, these plays are trite enough with their averted executions and super-plus of disguise. Equally conventional is a tragicomedy by George Gerbier D'Ouvilly, a Dutch soldier in the royal cause and dabbler in writing, entitled "The False Favorite Disgraced" (1657), a play whose plot, setting and character cast offer nothing new over the villain type of tragicomedy that Shirley and others had perfected.¹² "Love's Victory," a contemporary piece by William Chamberlayne is also a tragicomedy and one which the author confessedly wrote only for reading, altho an alteration under another name appeared later on the Restoration stage.¹³ Loyal sentiment is again much in evidence in the romantic plot, which takes us to Sicily, where an insurrection against the throne is subdued by Oroandes, the faithful general and very embodiment of loyalty. The rebellion quelled, rivalry in love sets in between the monarch and his subject, and Oroandes is compelled to meet his king

¹¹ Also called *The Royal Lovers*.

¹² The scene where Pausanio, the banished general, at his restoration demands the punishment of his rebellious son, is evidently borrowed—as Genest notes (X, 132)—from Fletcher's *Loyal Subject*. Also the device of the Duke adopting Friar's disguise to discover the true state of affairs, had been employed in tragicomedy by Massinger in the *Emperor of the East*, and Shirley in the *Gentleman of Venice*.

¹³ *Wits Led by the Nose; or, A Poet's Revenge: A Tragi-Comedy*, an anonymous redaction of Chamberlayne's play, acted 1677 and printed the following year. The comic plot, in which the chief characters are English gulls who are the dupes of their servants, is much exalted here and gives the name to the alteration. There is no variation in the serious theme, which is in prose, verse and rime. See Genest, I, 203.

in duel. The King falls; and Oroandes, mad with grief, believing himself a regicide, is only prevented at the end from self-destruction by the reappearance of the monarch, alive and moreover united to a former lost mistress, so all are appeased. Of no connexion with the serious theme is an absurd comic plot which apparently supplied the chief interest in the later alteration of the play.

The other tragicomedies that fall within the period of closed theaters may be readily dismissed. A number survive only in titles;¹⁴ while the "Wandering Lover" (1658), a ridiculous prose composition of a youth of twenty, Thomas Meriton, is too trifling for comment;¹⁵ and "Love's Labyrinth; or the Royal Shepherdess" (1660) of Thomas Forde, is an unhappy attempt at Arcadian pastoral.¹⁶ All these plays clearly belong to the drama of the past, and indicate no new interests—unless political—on the part of their authors, who at best were only writing for diversion. They show the persistent vitality of the *genre*, and serve to keep its traditions unbroken during the long pause in the acted drama before the new tastes and fresh influences of the Restoration demanded change.

The return of the Stuarts to power in 1660 marks the beginning of important innovations in things dramatic as in all else. The general revival of dramatic activity, thus inaugurated, had already been anticipated by Davenant's cultivation of a sister-art, and England now had the opera as well as the

¹⁴ In Robert Baron's *Pocula Castalia* (1650) there is a poem addressed, *To my Honour'd Friend Benjamin Garfield Esq; Upon his excellent Tragicomedy entitled The Unfortunate Fortunate*, p. 112. Nothing further is known of this play, nor of two other tragicomedies advertised at the end of *The New World of English Words* (1658) as "in the Presse, and ready for printing," and again, three years later, at the end of the 1661 ed. of *Wit and Drollery, Joviall Poems:—The History of Lewis the eleventh King of France: a Trage-Comedy*, and *The fair Spanish Captive: a Trage-Comedy*. There may also be chronicled an *Alfred or Right Reinthron'd. Being a Tragi-comedic*, a manuscript play in the Bodleian, dated 1659 and dedicated to Lady Blount by her brother R. K.

¹⁵ For a critical estimate of this play and its author, consult Langbaine, *Dramatick Poets*, p. 367 ff.

¹⁶ For full account of this play, see Homer Smith, *Pastoral Influence*, etc., *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assn.* (1897), XII, 387.

regular drama. New theatrical conditions resulted in an altered and more modern stage. A front curtain was introduced, scenic effects secured by the innovation of movable scenery, and for the first time woman actors interpreted female roles. Two rival companies were given a monopoly of all public performances; and, as both catered exclusively to royal patronage, the drama became less representative of the people and more subservient to the narrow and corrupt society of the court. Of the old dramatists, Davenant and Killigrew alone remained, and the latter had deserted playwriting for theatrical management. Above all, French influence had set in, and its dominance in dramatic art and criticism is continuous thruout the period.

Altered conditions and fresh impulses were straightway effective in breaking up the conventional grooves into which the drama of the past had settled. Yet the old still exercised a potent sway over the new. The opening of the theaters witnessed a prompt revival of the earlier favorites, especially the plays of Shakspeare and Beaumont and Fletcher, whose popularity, indeed, was unabating thruout the rest of the century. Many of the old plays had long runs. Among tragicomedies, "A King and No King," "Humorous Lieutenant," "Philaster," "Loyal Subject," "Spanish Curate," "Mad Lover" and "A Wife for a Month," were all stock plays during the early sixties, and Davenant's "Love and Honor" seems to have been revived with great success. Moreover, the same author's two post-Restoration tragicomedies are only redactions of earlier plays. The "Law against Lovers," acted in 1662, is an alteration of Shakspeare's "Measure for Measure," with the characters of Benedict and Beatrice from "Much Ado" added; and the "Rivals," a stock play in 1664, is made over from the "Two Noble Kinsmen," with an alteration of the *dénouement* that preserves both princes alive at the end. It is no doubt largely due to this continued interest in the drama of the earlier generation that tragicomedy owes its perpetuation thruout an age dominated by French models and French pseudo-classicism. For with the Restoration era Eng-

lish tragicomedy settles into a period of steady decline, perceptible almost from the beginning.¹⁷

Signs of decadent interest in the type are evident in many ways, altho tragicomedies continued to be written in some number thruout the period. But instead of receiving the attention of the chief playwrights as in the earlier Stuart reigns, the species is rarely cultivated by the leading figures of the age, with the notable exception of Dryden. And the mere number of tragicomedies becomes less impressive on examination. Many are only alterations of earlier models—as in the case of Davenant's two plays mentioned above—or translations of foreign originals; others are trifling productions, political lampoons or anomalies of some sort, most of which were never intended for the stage; and the great majority of conventional pieces are scattered among authors of little reputation as playwrights. Thus, a comparison of the sum of Restoration tragicomedy with that of the later Elizabethans, shows emphatically that the type had reached its high-water mark in the earlier period and was now receding. Causes of decline are readily evident.

It can hardly be said that popular taste was reacting against the drama of thrills and happy ending, for popular taste was now a more or less negligible quantity as a factor for playwrights to reckon with. The guiding spirit in the drama had shifted from the general public to the court, where French precept in dramatic art and criticism held full sway. The influence of current French fashions and models thus brought to bear on the English drama could not but vitally affect tragicomedy. By 1660 the *genre* itself in France was practically

¹⁷ At the conclusion of Davenant's *Law against Lovers* the conversation between Benedict and Beatrice seems to contain an oblique reference to the decay of tragicomedy:

Ben. I am afraid 'tis a Licence for Marriage.

Beat. No, Sir, Plays that end so, begin to be

Out of fashion.

Ben. Do you not see your Cousin *Juliet*?

She has been advis'd by a bauld Dramatick Poet

Of the next Cloister, to end her Tragy-Comedy

With Hymen the old way.

dead and the regular drama of Corneille and Racine reigned supreme. With the introduction of classical rule and precept into England, popular tragicomedy became outlawed, and was forced to look for sole support to its own traditions, which continued strong enough to enable it to live but not to rule. In the struggle thus begun between pseudo-classicism on the one hand, and English tradition on the other, tragicomedy was quickly dethroned, and rimed heroic tragedy installed in its stead. With each of these contending forces our subject is related. Its continuation along the lines of past tradition deserves the first consideration.

It will be remembered that tragicomedy at the end of the Elizabethan period was a fairly well defined species of romantic drama, displaying various characteristics, chief of which was the happy ending. The first decade following the Restoration may be roughly taken as a time when tragicomedies of the old school were still somewhat in vogue, tho showing occasional traces of the new fashions. For example, Richard Flecknoe, whose first tragicomedy of "Erminia" (1661) was refused the stage, came forward in 1664 with "Love's Kingdom," a pastoral tragicomedy written according to the classical unities.¹⁵ The *dramatis personae* as well offer departures from the well-worn Arcadian type. Shepherds are lacking, the ladies are all "nymphs," and the satyr's place is taken by Pamphilus, "a vicious young fellow, stranger to Love's Kingdom." But the plot has familiar traits: the love-chain is present, rivals contend over the honor of dying for their mistress, and the whole action centers on the strange laws so commonly met in pastoral and tragicomedy. Of similar type is Shadwell's "Royal Shepherdess" (1669), which the author confesses to be an adaptation from Fountain's "Rewards of Virtue"; his own contribution consisting chiefly in transferring the narrative into action, for, "tho the French do often relate the most considerable actions in their plays, especially

¹⁵ In the author's words, "With all the Rules of Time and Place so exactly observ'd, as whilst for Time 'tis all compriz'd in as few hours as there are Acts; for the Place, it never goes out of the view or prospect of Loves Temple."

in their tragedies, the English will not be content without seeing such actions done." The piece is only a conglomerate of old tragicomic motives and situations, linked to pastoral chiefly in the figure of the heroine, a supposed shepherdess, who is saved from execution in the end by the discovery of her royal birth. Stapylton's "Stepmother" (1663) shows its relation to the new period in the introduction of elaborate masques and much of an operatic nature, and its adherence to the old in a romantic plot of conventional design. The Stepmother herself is a villainous woman—a common Restoration type—who is bent on murdering her second husband, a Prince of Verulam, and his two children, who—it happens—are in love with her own two children. But a conversion of character brings all to rights.

The old romanticism is equally dominant in Dryden's first tragicomedy, the "Rival Ladies" (1664), in James Howard's "All Mistaken" (1667), a play combining a serious and a comic plot, and in the tragicomedies of Sir William Killigrew, "Ormasdes," "Selindra" and the "Siege of Urbin" (1665-66). Dryden's play especially is reminiscent of the Beaumont-Fletcher style. A few parts, indeed, are executed in rime—the author's first experiment in that kind of verse; but the play is clearly indicative of Dryden's early adherence to the old English drama, and is distinctly removed from his later and more representative method of tragicomedy. A Spanish novel is the source of an elaborately complicated plot, full of rapid and varied action, in which romantic improbabilities run riot and an astounding *dénouement* not only preserves all from impending disaster but solves a most elaborate love-chain.¹⁹ The tragicomedies of William Killigrew, on the other hand, are evidently modeled on the earlier melodramatic effusions of his younger brother Thomas. Two are written in the same

¹⁹ A contemporary tragicomedy also of Spanish ancestry is Sir Samuel Tuke's *Adventures of Five Hours* (1663), taken from Coello's *Los Empeños de Seis Horas*. This adaptation had a most extraordinary popularity. Three editions appeared in eight years; and Pepys and other contemporaries testify to its great stage success. It much resembles Davenant's *Distresses* in bustling action, distressed damsels and superfluity of complications.

prose style, and all exhibit an almost equal fondness for distressed princesses, intriguing villains, fighting, rescues, and general romantic extravagance. In one, Urbin is besieged by a lover who woos with an army; in "Ormasdes," the relative merits of love and friendship are put forward to the exaltation of the latter; and "Selindra" introduces us to an unknown princess of Hungary, who between lovers and villains is batted about like a shuttle-cock until the discovery of her identity brings happiness. In all, the device of concealed identity plays a main part, perhaps carried to the most extravagant limits in the "Siege of Urbin," where the city is relieved by the combined efforts of two martial strangers, one of whom turns out to be a rival of the besieging Duke and the other a damsel who has donned armor for the sake of love. Of these three indifferent plays, "Selindra" alone is known to have been acted. A few other so-called tragicomedies of no vital consequence also belong to these years of the dominance of the earlier drama;²⁰ but the plays above mentioned trace the

²⁰In the 1662 folio of the Duchess of Newcastle's peculiar dramatic compositions, there is one entitled *Matrimonial Trouble*, in two parts, the first called a *Comedy* and the second, which ends in deaths, a *Come-Tragedy*. And as one of her others, *The Religious*, contains an averted tragedy, it is also sometimes classed as a tragicomedy. None of the plays of this lady were ever acted. They are in a class by themselves; all are of her own invention, and made up of a series of disjointed scenes in which allegorical personages carry on conversation. Her acquaintance with tragicomedy is voiced in one of her prefaces thus: "In Tragi-Comedies I think Poets do not alwayes make all lye bleeding together; but I think for the most part they do; but the want of this swarm in the last Act and Scene, may make my Playes seem dull and vacant."

Equally unimportant is a tragicomedy called *Marciano; or The Discovery*, an occasional piece acted by amateurs in honor of the Royal Commissioner, at Edinburgh, 1663, and assigned to Wm. Clark. It presents a romantic story, advanced chiefly by a series of soliloquies, and regularly interspersed with comic scenes; for, as the Preface explains, "least it should seem too serious for the pallats of those, who expected nothing from the Stage but mirth: It was thought fit to interlude it with a comick transaction." (Reprinted with introduction by W. H. Logan, Edinburgh, 1871.)

Another anomaly of the *genre* title is *A Witty Combat: or, the Female Victor* (1663), supposedly by Thomas Porter, and described as "Acted

main course of tragicomedy of old tradition before Dryden's "Essay of Dramatic Poesy."

Turning now to tragicomedy in connexion with the new aspects of the drama, we are confronted with the question of its relation to the rimed heroic species that sprang into being in the early years of the Restoration, and for a time ruled supreme. In its essentials the new heroic play was no stranger on the English stage. Extravagant nobility of sentiment, exaggerated valor, heroic actions, and the other accompaniments of the form had been current in English drama since Beaumont and Fletcher.²¹ Moreover, these traits had found their chief abiding place in tragicomedy. Witness the conflicts between love and honor, the strained emotion, the rivalries in noble self-sacrifice, and the paragons of virtue that appear constantly in the tragicomedies of the last of the Elizabethans, notably Carlell, Cartwright and Davenant. In fundamental character, at least, the heroic play of the Restoration was the direct product of latter-day tragicomedy. But the influx of French ideas brought changes which in all but few instances definitely separated the rimed species from the sphere of its progenitor. The perfected heroic type was regular. It obeyed rules and proprieties, or at least approximated them. Rime supplanted verse; pure comedy was tabooed; and above all, poetic justice was administered with severity.

The result was a stancher type of play, not tragedy of the traditional formula always, but tragic over and above tragicomedy. Perhaps quite as many heroic plays confine their catastrophe to the wicked as end in a general slaughter. For example, in all of Dryden's so-called heroic tragedies the lovers are allowed to live and the deaths are visited upon others,

by Persons of Quality in Whitson-Week with great applause." The piece is a short prose skit of pure comedy, dramatizing a current incident that was causing a great stir in London. A certain Mary Moders, a notorious impostor, it seems, had palmed herself off as a German Princess and induced a young lawyer's clerk to marry her; and this is the basis of the play. The *German Princess* that Pepys saw acted April 15, 1664, is probably the same piece. (See Genest, I, 51-3.)

²¹ See James W. Tupper, *Relation of the Heroic Play to the Romances of Beaumont and Fletcher*. *Publ. Mod. Lang. Assn.*, 1905.

usually the villainous. This double ending, in fact, seems to have been the ideal arrangement; for in the typical heroic play the hero and heroine come off victorious, tho their happy union be ever so dearly purchased. But such plays, if incomplete as tragedies, are certainly not tragicomedies. True, in many plays of the latter species, deaths are by no means lacking and villains not infrequently suffer a tragic fate; but instances of the sort are usually well confined to the background and are not intended to arouse either pity or terror. In the heroic play the reverse is true. When events reach a tragic crisis, death leaves in its wake kings and queens and emperors, all villains perhaps, but still leading characters, so that the union of lovers is really incidental to the tragic part of the *dénouement*.

Yet in a few cases tragicomedy is definitely identified with the rimed heroic play of approved pattern. One or two even, which offered tragicomic action, were boldly written as such, but as a rule all were denominated tragedies whether they admitted deaths or not.²² Thus Orrery's "Henry V" (1664) and "Black Prince" (1667) contain nothing tragic in their actions; yet, while the first contents itself with the title of "History," the latter adds that of "Tragedy"²³—a misnomer that called from the contemporaneous Langbaine the following significant comment: "Tho' this Play in the Title-page be call'd a *Tragedy*, yet it ends successfully: and therefore I presume was rather stiled so by the Author, from the Quality and Grandeur of the Persons in the Drame, than from any unfortunate Catastrophe."²⁴ Both plays, indeed, have all the dignity of tragedy except painful or destructive action, and both rigidly

²² An exception may be noted in a MS. copy of Orrery's *Tryphon* in the Bodleian: *Triphon, a trage-comedy, written by the right honourable Roger earle of Orrery*. The play was printed 1669 as a *Tragedy*. It follows the usual scheme of double ending: the villainous tyrant and his confederate kill themselves and the lovers are happily joined. A later romantic tragedy of like catastrophe, *The Unnatural Mother* (1698), Anon., was entered on the *Term Catalogues* in Feb. of that year as a *Tragicomedy*, and printed without any classification.

²³ Listed, however, on the *Term Catalogues*, Nov. 22, 1669, as a *Tragicomedy*.

²⁴ *Dramatick Poets* (1691), p. 27.

✓ follow French practise; "Henry V," in fact, which claims the distinction of being the first full-fledged English heroic play, \ being confessedly written "in the French Manner."²⁵ Both are pseudo-historical, entirely in rime, with few characters and incidents, no touch of comedy, almost no action, and the unities much in evidence. A conflict between love and honor, or rather friendship, lies at the bottom of each piece, and the latter of course prevails. In the earlier play Owen Tudor nobly renounces his love in favor of his king; and in the "Black Prince" Lord Delaware, whose successful rival is his fast friend, accepts the inevitable with equal heroic grace.

Likewise, among the heroic plays of Sir Robert Howard are one or two of related interest to tragicomedy. The "Vestal Virgin" (1665) has the same peculiar technic earlier noticed in Suckling's "Aglaura."²⁶ Equipped with two fifth acts, the play may be a tragedy or tragicomedy at will.²⁷ In the latter case, the alteration begins at the close of Act IV with the explanatory note, "Thus it was Acted the Comical way"; and accordingly, the general slaughter of good and bad alike is reduced to the killing of one villain, while the other is allowed to repent, and the three models of heroism and friendship are happily joined to ladies of equal nobility. As usual, the play

²⁵ See Orrery's letter to a friend, Dodsley's ed. (1739), I, p. v. (Dodsley has mistaken the *Black Prince* for *Henry V.*) This play was probably written before 1662, but not acted until 1664, when it proved very popular. For a monograph on the author and his plays, see Ed. Siegert, *Roger Boyle, Earl of Orrery und seine Dramen zur Geschichte des heroischen Dramas in England. Wiener Beiträge zur Eng. Phil.* (1906), XXIII.

²⁶ Above, p. 145.

²⁷ Compare a contemporary instance of the same thing recorded by the prompter Downes in his *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708), p. 22: "The Tragedy of *Romeo* and *Juliet*, was made sometime after (after 1662) into a Tragicomedy, by Mr. *James Howard*, he preserving *Romeo* and *Juliet* alive; so that when the Tragedy was Reviv'd again, 'twas Play'd Alternately, Tragical one Day, and Tragicomical another; for several Days together." This Shaksperian alteration was never printed. The Restoration fondness for remodeling old tragedies in this way is again exemplified by Nahum Tate's alteration of *King Lear* (acted 1681), and Waller's contribution of a new fifth act to the *Maid's Tragedy* in 1690 (Genest, I, 337). See below, p. 180.

is mostly in rime, and comic admixture is strictly barred: customs which the author takes pains to defend in his well-known preface to the edition.²⁸ In regard to the latter practise, he admits that the earlier English playwrights have usually interwoven mirth and sadness in their plays, and that such a variety is defensible by the example of nature, but he himself is convinced, "That it is most proper to keep the Audience in one entire disposition both of Concern and Attention"; and, moreover, tho the mixture of contraries may be possible in Nature, it is not so fit for presentation—"an entire Connexion being the natural Beauty of all Plays."²⁹

This rigid severance of tragedy and comedy, which was a prominent part of the dramatic creed of such men as the Earl of Orrery and Sir Robert Howard, naturally involved no recognition on their part of a *genre* of tragicomedy. Consequently, plays of these writers were styled either tragedies or comedies according as they fulfilled certain proprieties of content and form recognized by classical precept, rather than for any other reason. Thus, Howard's later "Great Favorite, Or, the Duke of Lerma" (1668) is another "Tragedy" of approved style, written in rime and verse, and presenting a lofty and dignified subject, which has its foundation in contemporary Spanish history. But there is no tragic catastrophe. The Great Favorite saves himself from his enemies by adopting a Cardinal's habit; and we are to understand that his daughter Maria will reconsider her resolve to become a nun and eventually marry the young king. On the other hand, the same author's "Blind Lady" (1660) and "Surprizal" (1665) were called "Comedies"; but both offer more seriousness than Orrery's "Henry V" or the "Black Prince," particularly the "Surprizal," in which an unregenerate villain provides plenty of tragic possibilities.³⁰

One very important result, so far as tragicomedy is con-

²⁸ *Preface to Four New Plays*, 1665. Spingarn, *Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century* (1908), II, 97.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 100.

³⁰ Both the *Great Favorite* and the *Surprizal* were listed as tragicomedies by Langbaine. The *Blind Lady* was evidently never acted (Genest, X, 135).

cerned, of this determination of dramatic species according to the new criteria of French classicism deserves to be briefly recorded at this point, altho its elaboration belongs to the later pages. Restoration tragicomedy, beset on the one hand by an heroic play of double catastrophe, and on the other by an heroic "tragedy" of happy ending, into both of which it had imparted its vitality, now becomes mainly limited in current notion to a play of double plot, part comic and part romantic—a change of opinion that will be evident enough when we come to consider the tragicomedies of Dryden and the various critical dicta of the period on the mixed species. For the present it remains to chronicle one final point of contact between tragicomedy and the heroic drama.

Only three other plays are necessary to complete the connexion of our subject with the pure heroic species. Of these, the "Amazon Queen" (1667) by Jo. Weston, and Mrs. Boothby's "Marcelia" (1669) were written as tragicomedies, and the "Siege of Babylon" (1677) of Samuel Pordage, which could have borne the title with equal propriety, for some reason was left unclassified. The first and last belong to a class of Amazon plays that seem to have had a great vogue in England at this time, due apparently to current French romance.³¹ Both plays introduce a number of the same char-

³¹ The *Amazon Queen*, in fact, was never acted, because the author had heard of two other plays on the same subject intended for the stage. The prevalence of the species is again attested by an obvious reference in the *Siege of Babylon* to a contemporary tragedy of similar theme. In the *Epilog* Statira says:

At one House, I am, by Roxana, slain,
But see, at this, I am alive again.

Indeed, two other tragicomedies of the period are Amazon plays: *The Women's Conquest* (1671) by Ed. Howard (see below, p. 176) and an undated anonymous production, called *The Female Rebellion*. This last, which was printed for the first time in 1872 from a MS. in the Hunterian Museum at Glasgow, is a medley of rime, verse and prose, presenting both comic and heroic characters, and centers on an insurrection of Amazon generals against their Queen. The latter and her lover, a captive Scythian King, are of heroic cast, and in the end are united after the revolt has collapsed. The piece is assigned to the latter part of Charles II's reign. See ed. by A. S. (Alexander Smith), Glasgow, 1872.

acters, including Thalestris, Queen of the Amazons. Other similarities are marked. Both are completely in rimed verse, devoid of any comic touch, and the theme of each is the omnipresent love and honor, in which rivalries of many sorts absorb the attention. If rivals in love are friends, friendship always prevails, and a rivalry in generosity sets in until some compromise relieves the situation. In the "Amazon Queen" ladies instead of men are the rivals. Thalestris, Roxana and Statira are the suitors for the hand of King Alexander; and when the last named is finally successful, the haughty Amazon Queen resigns her love with a serenity only known to the heroic drama. The "Siege of Babylon" has a far more harrowing theme, but is equally trite in motive and device. The main plot repeats the familiar situation where the mutual love of the hero and heroine is crossed by the passion of a wicked queen for the former. Both in turn are given the choice of death or renunciation of their love, and both eagerly embrace death. But they are not put to the test. The upshot is that the course of events preserves and unites the lovers; and the unsuccessful queen, mad with jealousy, is borne raving from the stage. "Marcelia," on the other hand, both in content and form is somewhat less an heroic play of the new fashion. It is written in prose as well as rime, and, moreover, has a slight admixture of comedy. Plot, characters and situations are all reminiscent of the old style tragicomedy in which a treacherous favorite is the guiding spirit. A king, in a mad infatuation, deserts his own mistress and woos the betrothed of his subject, but in the end, when the villain has been unmasked and banished, he repents his action, unites the lovers, and returns to the first lady.

In fact, the rimed heroic type, for all its regularity of form and regard for classical precept, exhibits a constant repetition of the familiar traits of earlier tragicomedy. Both "Marcelia" and the "Siege of Babylon" introduce in the *dénouement* the old effective device of the return to life of supposed victims of villainy. And most of the character types, situations and motives that recur in the heroic species in general are borrowed direct, or only developed, from English romantic tragicomedy.

During the period of its heyday, the new heroic fashion completely supplanted tragicomedy in popular favor, and on its decline in the late seventies, the once dominant English stage type experienced no revival. But the influence of the transient vogue is noticeable in almost all the relatively few tragicomedies that fall either within or after the years of its chief supremacy; an influence seen best perhaps in Dryden's plays of the species. Even the "Rival Ladies," it will be remembered, was partly in rime, tho in all else closely identified with English tradition. "Secret Love," which followed in 1667, while by no means an heroic play of the new style, is clearly related to the species; and Dryden's three later tragicomedies follow a similar formula. These last, which appeared at wide intervals of his later dramatic career, are all antedated by the "Essay of Dramatic Poesy" (1668), to which some attention is due before considering the author's contribution to the form.

As this document contains the first discussion of tragicomedy in formal English criticism since Sidney, its historical importance to the subject is evident at once. More immediate interest lies in the fact that it also introduces us to contemporary critical opinion, both pro and con, as to the practise. Among the points at issue in current controversy, the mingling of tragic and comic is represented as one of the foremost. Thus, in the debate as to the relative merits of the old English drama and French practise, Lisideius, the champion of the latter, condemns tragicomedy as an English abnormality, which violates the unity of action in interweaving two separate and distinct plots in the same play, to the confusion of the audience and the dissipation of their interest.³²

³² Practically the same objection as Sir Robert Howard in his *Preface to Four New Plays* (1665) had earlier urged against the mingling of kinds (Cp. above, p. 165). Another contemporary judgment concerning this particular violation of decorum is expressed in Milton's preface to *Samson Agonistes* (1671), where the author speaks of "the Poets error of inter-mixing Comic stuff with Tragic sadness and gravity, or introducing trivial and vulgar persons: which by all judicious hath bin counted absurd, and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratifie the people." Cp. also Edward Phillips, who in his *Preface to Theatrum Poetarum* (1675) con-

The form, thus weighed in the balance of classical canon, is summarily dismissed with the excommunication: "There is no theatre in the world has any thing so absurd as the English tragi-comedy; 'tis a drama of our own invention, and the fashion of it is enough to proclaim it so; here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and passion, a third of honour, and fourth a duel: thus, in two hours and a half, we run through all the fits of Bedlam."³³ On the other hand, Dryden himself, in the person of *Neander*, not only readily controverts the arguments of his opponent, but boldly exalts the disputed form above all others. The transition from gravity to mirth, he argues, far from being either a strain on the attention or a check to enjoyment, is a natural and beneficial change. "Does not the eye pass from an unpleasant object to a pleasant in a much shorter time than is required to this? and does not the unpleasantness of the first commend the beauty of the latter?" Continued seriousness is oppressive, and the interspersed mirth furnishes the necessary dramatic counterpart. "I must therefore have stronger arguments," he concludes, "ere I am convinced that compassion and mirth in the same subject destroy each other; and in the mean time cannot but conclude, to the honour of our nation, that we have invented, increased, and perfected a more pleasant way of writing for the stage, than was ever known to the ancients or moderns of any nation, which is tragicomedy."³⁴

This daring assertion, the first real defense of tragicomedy in English criticism, shows Dryden both the champion of romantic license in an age of dawning classical severity and the ardent exponent of English tradition. Later, indeed, he relinquished this position in theory; but in 1668 the dominant influence on the author of the "*Rival Ladies*" and "*Secret Love*" was clearly the school of Shakspeare and Beaumont and Fletcher.

demns "that *Linsie-woolsie* intermixture of *Comic* mirth with *Tragic* seriousness, which being so frequently in use, no wonder if the name of Play be apply'd without distinction as well to *Tragedy* as *Comedy*." See Spingarn, I, 208; II, 270.

³³ W. P. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden*, I, 57.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 69-70.

Before leaving the "Essay," it may be worth noting that the arguments set forth both for and against the practise of tragicomedy are substantially those urged by the earlier critics and defenders of the Spanish national drama; an observation that gives some support to the position that Dryden was very possibly indebted to Spanish precedent for some of his critical theory.³⁵ Noteworthy again is the fact that tragicomedy is not debated from the standpoint of the happy ending, but of the unrelated mixture of gravity and mirth. True, practically all romantic tragicomedies of the past had admitted comic parts, which had often even attained the proportions of a well developed sub-plot;³⁶ but this feature was hardly more characteristic of the intermediate species than it was of tragedy. With the advent of the rimed heroic "tragedy," however, which omitted all comedy and which could end happily or unhappily, the critical conception of tragicomedy, as already noted, seems to have become restricted to a play of double plot, one serious and one comic, the former of course ending successfully. This, at any rate, is the formula for the type that Dryden inaugurated in his own practise with "Secret Love" and adhered to in his later career. With these plays we are now concerned.

Beside the "Rival Ladies" already considered, Dryden's contribution to tragicomedy consists of four other plays: "Secret Love" (1668), "Marriage à-la-Mode" (1673), "Spanish Friar" (1681), and "Love Triumphant" (1693). These four plays—tho produced at wide intervals stretching over a period of twenty-five years, during which the author's dramatic views had undergone a complete revolution from those stated in the "Essay"—are practically alike in materials and method of construction. The distinguishing trait of each is the double plot, one serious or heroic and the other humorous, the two only superficially connected and usually given

³⁵ See W. P. Ker, *Essays of John Dryden*, I, p. xxxvi; cp. also Alfred Morel-Fatio, *Les Défenseurs de la Comedia* (*Bulletin Hispanique*, 1902, IV), pp. 31-6.

³⁶ Cp. *Spanish Curate*, *Fool would be a Favorite*, *City Night-Cap*, etc., all of which are named from the comic plots.

about equal prominence, the serious scenes in verse alternating with the comic in prose. In the romantic plots heroic elements combine with the conventional features of traditional tragic-comedy. Love is always the central interest, ever beset by opposing forces of many sorts, while in the background kingdoms are tottering and war is imminent. The characters are all aristocrats—tyrant kings, love-lorn queens, heroes of surpassing valor and nobility, heroines torn with love and duty, unsuccessful rivals, and the other type personages necessary to fill out the cast. Quick changes of fortune keep the action bustling and the outcome in the balance. The hero may be now imprisoned and the next moment dethroning the tyrant; while sudden revelations of identity, conversions of character, and happy discoveries furnish a full quota of surprises. Events never culminate in a catastrophe. In the end all are reconciled: a contest of arms may resolve into a contest of magnanimity, unsuccessful love is resigned to its fate, and the hero and heroine are happily joined.

Constant repetition of motive and situation is a distinctive feature of the serious parts of these plays. The stock elements of heroic drama recur again and again in all; and in “*Marriage à-la-Mode*” and “*Love Triumphant*” the plots themselves are little more than repetitions. In both plays love is crossed first by parental interference and next by honor; the hero is first thought to be the King’s son and later is discovered to be of another royal line; both heroines place duty to father above love for the hero; and in each case an insurrection ushers in the *dénouement*. The other two tragicomedies as well exhibit many of the same features, always an insurrection and always a moral struggle between love and some form of honor. In the “*Spanish Friar*” when the young hero learns that the deposed king, whose murder his newly wedded wife has sanctioned, is his own father, he is torn by a whirlwind of conflicting emotions:

Love, justice, nature, pity, and revenge,
Have kindled up a wildfire in my breast,
And I am all a civil war within!

But the disclosure that the king still lives happily solves his

moral dilemma. And again, in "Secret Love," when the hero discovers that the Maiden Queen cherishes a secret and ardent passion for him, a conflict between love and duty results—love for his betrothed and duty toward his sovereign; but the struggle ends with the Queen herself, the author's "great and absolute pattern of honour," nobly resigning in favor of her humble rival. In short, there is little in character, sentiment or plot that is not directly traceable to heroic drama or romantic tragicomedy.

Turning now for a moment to the comic admixture in these plays—which figures so prominently in the author's theory of tragicomedy—we find that it is not only equally elaborate with the serious portion, but in one or two instances even furnishes the main interest. Both the "Spanish Friar" and "Marriage à-la-Mode" take their titles from the comic plot;³⁷ and in the latter this part is so obviously the chief concern that the play itself is termed a "Comedy."³⁸ Certainly in these two plays, at least, the lighter portions have the better claim to merit. Both Melantha, the affected lady, and Dominick, the rascally friar, are telling satires of contemporary application, and the latter is generally rated as one of the best humorous creations of Restoration comedy of manners. These comic plots are all concerned with love intrigues, clever but coarse, carried on between gallants, maids of honor, and profligates and gulls of one sort or another. As stated above, the two plots are but indifferently united and each is conducted to an independent conclusion. Dryden, indeed, prides himself on the skillful manner with which he has tied the conflicting interests in the "Spanish Friar," and perhaps more ingenuity is displayed in that case than in the others;³⁹ but at best the juncture is a perfunctory one. The two casts may be taken

³⁷ The sub-title of the *Spanish Friar*, called the *Double Discovery*, refers to the serious plot.

³⁸ Again Langbaine, writing a few years later, takes exception to this denomination: "This Play tho' stil'd in the Title-page a Comedy. is rather a Tragi-Comedy, and consists of two different Actions; the one *Serious*, the other *Comick*, both borrow'd from two Stories which the Author has tackt together." *Dramatick Poets* (1691), p. 166. Cp. above, p. 163.

³⁹ See dedication to the *Spanish Friar*; cp. also preface to *Don Sebastian*.

from the same court, and they usually have one or two characters in common, a courtier or a soldier who may be the dependent or relative of the hero of the serious plot, and comes to his aid in time of need. Thus, Carlos, one of the colonels prominent in the comic plot of "Love Triumphant," heads the revolt that overthrows the tyrant king and places Alphonsus in power; and the connexion in the "Spanish Friar" is somewhat similar. This exaltation of the comic plot in tragicomedy, its practical severance from the serious interest, and the part it plays in the critical conception of the form, are, in fact, the chief innovations that the Restoration introduces to the *genre*, all of which are seen to best advantage in Dryden's work.⁴⁰

Tho Dryden cultivated tragicomedy periodically thruout his dramatic career, it must be remembered that his attitude toward the type changed diametrically in his later years from that enunciated in the "Essay." After "Marriage à-la-Mode" in 1673, his ideas of dramatic art began to undergo a gradual revolution to the classic point of view, which Rapin, Boileau and Bossu were proclaiming in France and Rymer in England; so that the author of the "Spanish Friar" and "Love Triumphant" was no longer the ardent champion of tragicomedy and romantic license of earlier years, but a complete convert to classic theory. In the "Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy" (1679), which proclaims this change of standpoint, appears a direct retraction of his previous dictum on tragicomedy: "Two different independent actions distract the attention and concernment of the audience, and consequently destroy the attention of the poet; if his business be to move terror and pity, and one of his actions be comical, the other tragical, the former will divert the people, and utterly make void his greater purpose."⁴¹ And on these grounds he condemns his own "Marriage à-la-Mode."

⁴⁰ *The Comical Revenge: or, Love in a Tub* (1664) by George Etherege may be mentioned in connexion with Dryden's tragi-comedies as a similar composition of combined comic and romantic plot, altho its contemporary rating was always as a comedy.

⁴¹ And later in the same essay: "He who treats of joy and grief together is in a fair way of causing neither of those effects." W. P. Ker, I, 208, 223.

From this time on Dryden's critical attitude toward tragedy, or any mingling of kinds, continues to be one of condemnation. It is an ill-ordered practise, yet it pleases popular taste; and this is his excuse for his own continued cultivation of the form. His very next play was the "Spanish Friar," a flagrant violation of his new critical tenets. But, as he states in the dedication, "For this time I satisfied my own humour, which was to tack two plays together; and to break a rule for the pleasure of variety. The truth is, the audience are grown weary of continued melancholy scenes; and I dare venture to prophesy, that few tragedies except those in verse shall succeed in this age, if they are not lightened with a course of mirth. For the feast is too dull and solemn without the fiddles."⁴² The double plot of "Love Triumphant," as well, the author admits, cannot be defended by reason or authority, but it is "a fault," he adds, "which I would often practise, if I were to write again, because it is agreeable to the English genius. We love variety more than any other nation; and so long as the audience will not be pleased without it, the poet is obliged to humour them."⁴³ After "Love Triumphant," Dryden wrote no more plays, yet in his "Parallel of Poetry and Painting" (1695) he returned again to the subject of tragicomedy, but only to reiterate his objections to its hybrid nature. "Our

⁴² *Ibid.*, I, 249. Cp. similar sentiment in the preface to *Don Sebastian* (1690): "I have observed, that the English will not bear a thorough tragedy; but are pleased that it should be lightened with underparts of mirth"; also the preface to *Cleomonas* (1692): "After all, it was a bold attempt of mine, to write upon a single plot, unmixed with comedy; which, though it be the natural and true way, yet is not to the genius of the nation." Scott-Saintsbury ed., VII, 316; VIII, 220.

Dryden, writing in later years, repeated his objections to the double plot structure of the *Spanish Friar*: "Neither can I defend my *Spanish Friar*, as fond as otherwise I am of it, from this imputation (Gothic style): for though the comical parts are diverting, and the serious moving, yet they are of an unnatural mingle: for mirth and gravity destroy each other, and are no more to be allowed for decent than a gay widow laughing in a mourning habit." And later in the same essay: "The faults of that drama are in the kind of it, which is tragi-comedy. But it was given to the people: and I never writ anything for myself but *Antony and Cleopatra*." *A Parallel of Poetry and Painting* (1695), W. P. Ker, II, 147, 152.

⁴³ Scott-Saintsbury ed., VIII, 375-6.

English tragi-comedy must be confessed to be wholly Gothic," he writes, "notwithstanding the success which it has found upon our theatre."⁴⁴ And later in the "Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire" (1697), the structural peculiarity of the species again draws his comment: "In a play of the English fashion, which we call a tragi-comedy, there is to be but one main design; and though there be an underplot, or second walk of comical characters and adventures, yet they are subservient to the chief fable, carried along under it, and helping to it; so that the drama may not seem a monster with two heads."⁴⁵ This last passage even seems to indicate that the author justified the form provided there was organic connexion and a proper balance between the serious and comic plots. At any rate, these critical utterances on the subject are all right in line with one tolerably well defined conception of tragicomedy, illustrated best in Dryden's own practise and substantiated by other evidence of the period.

Dryden's contribution to tragicomedy is easily the most considerable and important of the period. No other writer, in fact, seriously cultivated the kind. The other plays of the title that fall between 1670 and the end of the century form a heterogeneous group, representing almost as many authors as plays, and generally indicative of the steady decadence of the form. The spirit of the age called for comedy rather than for serious drama; and while tragedy continued to occupy the efforts of the chief poets, tragicomedy as a stage factor was almost a negligible quantity during the last quarter of the century, steadily dwindling in prestige and quality with each succeeding decade. This is shown in part by the fact that the various excrescent forms of the type almost double the number of proper tragicomedies. Some are translations of foreign models; others are Elizabethan alterations, testifying to the continued popularity of the earlier masters; while the Revolution of 1688 ushered in another outburst of political tragicomedies, all written for an imaginary stage. There remain, then, beside the plays of Dryden, only about a dozen miscellaneous pieces that keep alive the tragicomedy of past

⁴⁴ W. P. Ker, II, 146.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 102.

tradition. These, moreover, rather defy classification. Most show the hereditary traits of the species allied in one way or another to Restoration practise; and all are of indifferent merit.

Among this last group are a few that offer some little critical interest to the subject. Edward Howard's Amazon tragicomedy, called the "Women's Conquest" (1671), is introduced by an elaborate preface, in which the author, in his discussion of the current dramatic questions, makes much the same observations on tragicomedy as his contemporaries:— It is a two-fold type, a mixture of heroic and comic parts, and distinctly an English product. He has given the title to his own play after the example of the Elizabethans, whose tragicomedies "are well enough known to be at this day no inconsiderable ornament and entertainment of the Stage." He will not, however, attempt to justify the word, "Since every Play, if strictly taken, must be either Tragedy or Comedy, excluding Farce." But he wisely surmises the term to be an invention of former English poets to denominate "mixt Plays," which the heroic part exalted above the title of comedy.⁴⁶ Howard's play itself unites in one plot both the serious and comic characters, all of whom get into the same entanglements by reason of a strange Scythian law whereby a man may divorce his wife at pleasure. This discrimination against women arouses the hostility of a neighboring Amazon queen. War results: the women are victorious; the law repealed; and all settled according to heroic code.⁴⁷ Somewhat the same manner of mixture is preserved in Ravens-

⁴⁶ To continue his remarks on the mixed species: "I do not find but the highest of our English Tragedies . . . are at all undervalued by their Authors, in being sweetned with mirth, for as all people do not come purposely to sympathize their passions with those of the Plays, so some will expect to be diverted accordingly; nor do I believe that it is less natural (as some have thought) to form a Play, that shall have this variety of Genius, then I do to find of mankind some grave, reserv'd, fierce, cruel, others of more airy and pleasant converse, to mingle humours and affairs together."

⁴⁷ Ed. Howard was also the author of a non-extant *Change of Crowns*, which Pepys saw April 15, 1667, and described as "a great play and serious." On this evidence Genest (I, 69) lists it as a tragicomedy.

croft's "King Edgar and Alfreda" (1677), a pseudo-historical piece, in which the author has introduced "a run of Comedy, but not after the manner of our Old Tragi-Comedies, where one-half of the Play are Heroes, and the other Mechanicks and Buffoons."⁴⁸ The serious interest, which concerns a love episode chronicled of King Edgar, ends tragically in fact. An elaborately artificial *dénouement* results in the accidental killing of both the Queen and Ethelwold, which, however, clears the way for the union of the King and Alfreda. Still more conglomerate in character is Nathaniel Lee's "Princess of Cleve" (c. 1680-82), well described by the author in his dedication as "this Farce, Comedy, Tragedy, or mere Play."⁴⁹ The serious parts arise to real tragic pathos, while the comedy is disgustingly low. One death occurs; but in the end the Princess wins her moral struggle, and the profligate gallant, who is the hero of both plots, repents his evil ways.

Among the better known playwrights of the day, Crowne and Wilson each made one experiment in tragicomedy, while Mrs. Behn produced three plays of the title. A generally scrambled character is about the sole quality these productions have in common. "Juliana, or the Princess of Poland" (1671), Crowne's first play, introduces a double romantic love story in a pseudo-historical setting, where two warring Polish factions meet to elect a king, and interweaves comedy and spectacle in a turbulent action of fighting, rescues and sudden changes of fortune, all of which—barring the suicide of a baffled Cardinal—ends in approved tragicomic fashion. Wilson's "Belphegor" (1690), on the other hand, offers nothing to substantiate its claim to the *genre* title. The familiar story from Machiavelli of the Marriage of the Devil gives abundant opportunity for comedy and spectacle, and with it the author has united a more dignified plot; but the action presents no

⁴⁸ See the author's prefaced *Life of Edgar, King of the West Saxons*.

⁴⁹ Printed 1689 without classification, but entered in the *Term Catalogues*, June, 1697, as a *Tragi-Comedy*. This play is one of the many of the period founded on French romance.

serious interest.⁵⁰ Of Mrs. Behn's tragicomedies, "Forced Marriage" (1671) and the "Young King" (c. 1679) follow romantic tradition, are written in verse and rime, and offer no particular departures from the commonplace. The plot of the first is confined to a court, and the *dénouement* is given a spectacular turn by the supposedly murdered heroine personating first her own ghost and then her angel. In the latter, love is given its usual background of war; the characters are decidedly those of French romance;⁵¹ and two subordinate love plots are cleverly organized with the main theme. The "Widow Ranter" (1690) is different—a deliberate mixture of comedy and tragedy, entirely in prose and topical in interest. The play is primarily a satire on colonial misgovernment in Virginia; while the historical figure of Bacon, the instigator of Bacon's Rebellion, and an Indian Queen furnish a romantic interest, and their deaths a tragic catastrophe.

A few other scattered and unimportant tragicomedies are so conventional in character and plot that they might with propriety date from the preceding age. Such a play is an anonymous "Emilia" (1672), a tragicomedy of the mistaken iden-

⁵⁰ Almost equally unentitled to the name of tragicomedy is the contemporary *Successful Strangers* (1690) of Wm. Mountfort, a play of love intrigue in Spanish fashion, mostly in prose, and—with the exception of one serious episode—pure comedy. With it should be mentioned a curious anomaly in the shape of a religious tragicomedy by Richard Tuke: *The Divine Comedian or the Right Use of Plays, Improved, in a sacred Tragico-Comedy*, 1672, which appeared earlier the same year under the title, *The Soul's Warfare, comically digested into scenes, acted between the Soul and her enemies*. As these titles indicate, it is distinctly a moral production; nor is it known to have been acted. The period also claims two academic tragicomedies: a later version of the *Bellum Grammaticale* entitled, *The Warr of Grammar a Tragick-Comedy Acted by the Scholars of Cranebrook School more than once not without Applause. In which the whole vulgar Grammar with something of the Authors own, is festively handled*, by Samuel Hoadley, 1666, with a ms. copy of the same, *Basileia seu Bellum Grammaticale Tragico-Comædia*, preserved in British Museum, Add. Mss. 22725 (described by J. Nichols, *Lit. Anec. of the 18th. Cen.*, VIII, 761); and a MS. play in the Bodleian: *Talpæ: sive Conjuratio Papistica. Tragico-comædia. Autore Thom: Singleton. Scripta Febr: 7 mo. 1688/9*.

⁵¹ The plot is founded mainly on the *Cléopâtre* of Calprenède.

tity formula, given the added feature of regularity, the author expressly avowing his allegiance to decorum and the unities.⁵² Years later the actor Jos. Harris compiled old motives into a tragicomedy of the villainous favorite type, called "The Mistakes" (1690). For four tedious acts the arch-intriguer disrupts friendships, estranges lovers, and hoodwinks a Vice-roy, and when caught in the fifth, is so repentant that he pleads for death lest he work more mischief—a request that is magnanimously overruled and banishment substituted in its stead. To conclude the list of these sporadic productions of traditional type, it remains only to chronicle two anonymous tragicomedies that appeared in 1697: "The Triumphs of Virtue" and "Timoleon; or, the Revolution," both of conventional design. In the former the virtue of a romantic heroine converts a monarch from evil intentions, reclaims a dissipated brother, and recalls a recreant lover, and the latter play unites a satirical comic plot to the serious theme. With these two plays English romantic tragicomedy practically passes off the stage.

As previously stated, it was probably due to the persistent popularity of the later Elizabethans thruout the Restoration period that tragicomedy survived, even to the limited extent indicated by the above plays, in an age of devotion to comedy and growing reaction against romance. Of the old masters, Shakspeare and Beaumont and Fletcher continued to be the favorites on the later Restoration stage; and both in revivals and alterations of their plays tragicomedies shared prominently. "A King and No King" and "Philaster" especially seem to have commended themselves to Restoration taste, in spite of the lack of interest in Shakspeare's romantic

⁵² In the dedication the author says: "The *Writing* or *Language*, I have accomodated to the Persons, *Verse*; for the more Heroick, and *Prose*, for the rest, with often allay of this with the other, to make it more flexible, which else would be too stiff." And in an additional note: "The Unity of Place (besides that of Time and Persons) so exactly observed, as there is never any breach or breaking of the Scenes, until the end of the Act." The play had not been acted when printed. The superscription bears the words: *Emilia, a Tragedy*; but the piece is correctly denominated in the Epilog, *Tragi-Comedy*.

comedies. Even when Langbaine wrote in 1691 both were holding the stage with great success;⁵³ while the popularity of "Philaster" is further attested by two alterations that fall within the later years of the century. The first of these, presumably the work of the Duke of Buckingham about 1683, appeared under the suggestive title of "The Restauration: or, Right will take Place," but was evidently never acted and not even printed until 1714.⁵⁴ With the names of the *dramatis personæ* disguised, an added prolog and epilog, and some slight alterations in detail, the play practically follows its original, and seems free from any more pointed political significance than that conveyed by the altered title. Settle's revision in 1695, on the other hand, advertises "the last two acts new written;" and by the addition of some new scenes the tragic action is intensified, but the final *dénouement* is unchanged.⁵⁵ Other favorites of the time include Fletcher's "Island Princess," which gave rise to no less than three alterations during the period.⁵⁶ Shakspeare's "Cymbeline" was materially revised by Dufey and renamed the "Injured Princess, or the Fatal Wager" (1682).⁵⁷ And of related interest to the subject is Tate's version of "King Lear" (1681), which ends happily; while Waller, to please the court, attempted "to soften the rigour" of the "Maid's Tragedy" by a new fifth act which preserves all alive.⁵⁸

⁵³ Of these two plays Langbaine says: "*King and No King*, a Tragi-Comedy, which notwithstanding its Errors discover'd by Mr. Rymcr in his *Criticisms*, has always been acted with Applause, and has lately been reviv'd on our present Theatre with so great success, that we may justly say with *Horace*, *Hæc placuit semel, hæc decies repetita placebit*. . . . *Philaster*, or *Love lies a Bleeding*: a Tragi-Comedy which has always been acted with Success; and has been the diversion of the Stage, even in these days" (pp. 210, 213). The *Humorous Lieutenant* Langbaine had also "often seen acted with Applause" (p. 209).

⁵⁴ For full title, see *Appendix*.

⁵⁵ Genest, II, 66.

⁵⁶ First anonymously in 1669 and printed as a *Comedy*; next "Reviv'd with alterations" by Nahum Tate in 1687; and finally made into an opera by Mottcux in 1699.

⁵⁷ Dufey also altered Fletcher's *Sea Voyage* as *A Common-Wealth of Women*. *A Play* (1686), which omits all the serious incident.

⁵⁸ Langbaine, *Dramatick Poets* (1691), p. 212. The alteration was not successful.

To attempts of this sort to improve upon old plays must be added a few tragicomedies translated from foreign originals. Of French cultivators of the species, Corneille and Quinault seem to have aroused the only direct echo across the channel. In the preceding era the "Cid" had made its appearance in English dress, and the eve of the Restoration, it will be remembered, had ushered in two of Quinault's tragicomedies, the work of Sir William Lower.⁵⁹ Later translations from these authors include two more tragicomedies. In 1670 a certain John Dancer gave a faithful version of Corneille's "Nicomède," and followed it in 1675 with "Agrippa, King of Alba: or, The False Tiberinus," taken from Quinault. Both plays were acted successfully at Dublin—where, it seems, the author was in the service of the Lord Lieutenant—and both represent the same type of "regular" tragicomedy, or tragedy of happy ending, which has its English counterparts in such plays as the "Black Prince" and the "Amazon Queen." Two other tragicomedies complete the list of translations. "The Royal Cuckold: or, Great Bastard" (1693), an evident lampoon on Lewis XIV of France,⁶⁰ purports to be a translation from the German by Paul Vergerius; and the "Marshall of Luxembourg, upon his Death-Bed" (1695) is the title of an anonymous version of a contemporary French piece.⁶¹ Both are reproductions of sporadic and unimportant survivals of the *genre* abroad, and were evidently never acted.

Of even less intrinsic importance as drama is a late group of political or pamphlet tragicomedies which furnishes the concluding aspect of the subject in the Restoration era. This particular dramatic excrescence of Commonwealth times appeared again during the political upheavals attending the Revolution of 1688. The abdication of King James and the

⁵⁹ Above, p. 154.

⁶⁰ Taken from a book called the *Secret History of Lewis XIV of France*.—*Biographia Dramatica*.

⁶¹ Lancaster records a MS. original of this play in the Bibliothèque Nationale, dated 1700: *Monsieur le maréchal de Luxembourg au lit de la mort, tragicomédie en cinq actes* . . . MDCC. MS. fr. 2957, fol. 232. (*The French Tragi-Comedy*, p. 151, note 4.) The English version dated 1695 was reprinted 1710.

establishment of the new regime released pent-up Protestant hatred of the fallen King and the Papistry in a series of dramatic pamphlets, most of which were termed tragicomedies like their predecessors of Cromwellian times. In fact, they represent only a more elaborate form of the same sort of contemptible squib encountered in the earlier period; virulently partisan in spirit, grossly satiric in tone, and purely political in purpose. Events connected with the downfall of the Stuart tyranny and the Irish revolt are the subjects; popular scandals of the late court are aired at length; the characters of James and the priests put in the worst possible light; and the cruelty and cowardice of the Irish Catholics exposed and ridiculed. None, it is safe to say, were ever publicly presented.

In 1690 appeared a trilogy of "tragicomedies" of this sort: "The Bloody Duke; or the Adventures for a Crown," "The Abdicated Prince: or, the Adventures of Four Years," and "The Late Revolution: or, the Happy Change";—the three advertised as containing "a full account of the private Intrigues of the Two Last Reigns, and of all the most remarkable Transactions that have hapned since."⁶² The first two are companion pieces, professedly by the same anonymous author; the scene of each laid at the court of "Alba Regalis," and the characters and events so thinly masked as to be readily recognized. James II is the chief object of attack. In the first he is the "Bloody Duke," whose crimes are represented as culminating in the murder of his own brother, King Charles II, whereby he gains the crown; and the "Abdicated Prince" is a continuation of his infamous career as King, together with his downfall. Other court personages under disguised names come in for scurrility and ridicule, while an honest Remarquo, a deep observer of the intrigues going on about him, appears as a sort of *raisonneur* in each piece. The "Late Revolution" deals with events just preceding the arrival of William of Orange, and is levelled more particularly against Popery. Father Peters is the butt of abuse; his designs are all frustrated by the advance of the Dutch; and he and his party barely

⁶² See conclusion of the *Bloody Duke*.

escape destruction in the Protestant triumph. All three plays vie with one another in grossness of ribaldry and lack of any redeeming feature. Others are less personal but equally partisan. "The Royal Voyage, or the Irish Expedition" of the same year, which describes the famous defense of Londonderry, has as its chief end "to expose the Perfidious, Base, Cowardly, Bloody Nature of the Irish, both in this and all past Ages;"⁶³ and the "Siege and Surrender of Mons" (1691) rehearses the events of that historic occurrence to disclose "the Villany of the Priests, and the Intrigues of the French." Both are equally undramatic, consisting chiefly of a series of scenes alternating between the opposing forces; while one last "tragicomedy" of the same type, "The Siege of Derry" (1692),⁶⁴ pictures again the events recounted in the "Royal Voyage." To all these half-dozen anti-Jacobite tragicomedies the title name seems to be applied with the same indiscrimination noticeable in the earlier anti-Puritan tracts. Perhaps its use in such cases may be traced to much the same impulse that leads one today to describe as tragicomic a South American revolution or any other upheaval in state or politics that invites satire or has its amusing or farcial side. A more subtle explanation is baffling.⁶⁵

The steady decay of tragicomedy during the period reviewed has been noted from time to time in the preceding pages. A summarizing view of the situation only emphasizes the extent

⁶³ The name of this play, as the author notes, "relates to another part yet to come." The present piece deals only with events leading up to William's Irish expedition, concluding with the news of his arrival at Carrickfergus. Evidently the second part never appeared.

⁶⁴ There is also record of a tragicomedy of the same date called *Piety and Valor; or Derry Defended*, which the editors of the *Biographia Dramatica* presume to be only another edition of this same piece.

⁶⁵ With the six pamphlet tragicomedies considered above should be mentioned one other not in dramatic form: *The Revolter. A Tragicomedy Acted between the Hind and Panther, and Religio Laici, &c.* London, Printed in the Year 1687. As the title suggests, this is a personal satire on Dryden's turning Papist. It is not even in dialog, being made up largely of quotations from the two works in question, whereby the author sets forth the inconsistencies of the Laureate's religious tenets. See Scott-Saintsbury ed., X, 7.

of decline and the relative insignificance of the species compared with its past eminence. In many ways the position that tragicomedy occupies in Restoration drama is practically the reverse of that attained before the closing of the theatres. In the earlier period the chief playwrights of the day lent their best efforts to the form, while among later cultivators Dryden is the only important figure. Moreover, the body of Elizabethan tragicomedy is practically homogeneous, whereas in the latter period the various irregular and excrescent forms of the species far outnumber the output of normal tragicomedies. In fact, subtracting unacted pieces, translations, redactions, pamphlets, and anomalies of all sorts from the eighty odd tragicomedies considered in the present chapter, we find that the remnant totals little more than one third of the whole. Causes of this disintegration have already been suggested. Tragicomedy was distinctly out of harmony with the classical spirit of the time, while the rise of comedy and opera and the decline of romance no doubt aided in reducing the form to an outworn fashion. Moreover, the chief vitality of the *genre* had been absorbed in the rimer heroic species, which in all but some half-dozen cases took the name of tragedy. In short, of all the formative influences of the time, the continued vitality of the Elizabethans alone made for the persistence of romantic tragicomedy on the Restoration stage. Yet amid continued revivals and redactions of former favorites, each succeeding decade brought forth fewer new plays of the old type. From 1660 English tragicomedy, as an independent dramatic kind, was steadily on the wane, and by 1700 it had flickered completely out of existence.

The dominance of old tradition thruout this period has been marked from beginning to end. The course of Restoration tragicomedy, as described by the legitimate and representative plays of the type, is directly along the lines inaugurated by Beaumont and Fletcher and continued by Massinger, Shirley, and the other later Elizabethans. The same romantic plots, motives, characters and situations employed by these authors reappear little altered in the plays of Manuche, Flecknoe, William Killigrew, Dryden and Mrs. Behn. Even the few

tragicomedies of heroic formula betray an almost equal dependence on previous example. What innovations the Restoration brought to the species are innovations of form rather than of material. The keener critical sense of the age is evidenced in a curbing of romantic license and an increased regularity of structure, even in the tragicomedies of old tradition. Some are actually constructed with each unity strictly observed ; while in many the author's concern for critical proprieties is voiced in preface or prolog ; and the increased attention given comic parts, and their severance from the main theme—so noticeable in Dryden—are results of the same thing. Occasional lapses into rimed verse, the frequent insertion of operatic and spectacular elements, and the recurrence of heroic traits, further relate the type to the distinctive features of the period. With these divergencies, Restoration tragicomedy is merely the decadent end of Elizabethan. It is in the realm of criticism that the period brings new interest to the subject.

Before the closing of the theatres, tragicomedy, while unsupported by critical theory, was clearly recognized as a form whose distinctive feature was the happy outcome of tragical events. The Restoration conception of the species, however, according to the critical utterances of Dryden and his contemporaries, has been found to consist primarily in the mingling of tragic and comic parts in one play, in apparent disregard of the character of the *dénouement*. This departure in critical attitude may be explained as a natural result of the dominance of French ideas in Restoration dramatic theory. In pseudo-classic circles abroad, tragedy and tragicomedy could no longer be distinguished by the nature of the ending. Corneille had renamed his "Cid" a tragedy on account of its regular features, and had followed it with other "tragedies" of the same sort. In 1657 d'Aubignac had devoted a chapter of his "Pratique du Théâtre" to a discussion of tragicomedy and a condemnation of the word in its modern acceptance, contending that by the example of the ancients tragedies could end happily, and that the name of tragicomedy for such plays was not only ill-applied but destroyed their beauty by foretell-

ing the outcome.⁶⁶ As this treatise was translated into English in 1684, it no doubt aided in giving credence to the view already well established in critical circles that the happy outcome did not unmake a tragedy that fulfilled the requirements of material and form. The "Black Prince" and the "Great Favorite" were both "tragedies" to their authors. Rymer described his own "Edgar" (1678) as the "sort of Tragedy, which ends happily;"⁶⁷ and Dryden, speaking of "A King and No King" in his "Grounds of Criticism" (1679), asserted that "if the farce of Bessus were thrown away," the play would be "of that inferior sort of tragedies, which end with a prosperous event."⁶⁸ That Dryden distinguished this type of play from tragicomedy is further attested by the dedication of the "Spanish Friar," in which, after declaring the difficulty of conducting two contrary actions in one piece, he adds:

⁶⁶ "We have taken away the name of Tragedy from all those Plays where the *Catastrophe* is happy, and without blood, though both the Subject and Persons are heroick, and have given them the name of *Tragicomedys*. . . .

"I shall not absolutely fall out with this name, but I shall shew that it is at least superfluous, since the word Tragedy signifies as well those Plays that end in joy, as those that end in blood; provided still the Adventures be of Illustrious persons. And besides, the signification of the word *Tragicomedy* is not true in the sense we use it; for in those plays that we apply it to, there is nothing at all Comical, all is grave and heroick, nothing popular and burlesk.

"But moreover, this title alone may destroy all the beauty of a Play, which consisting particularly in the *Peripetia*, or return of Affairs, it may discover that too soon: since the most agreeable thing in a *Dramma* is, that out of many sad and Tragick appearances, the Event should at last be happy, against the Expectation of the whole Audience; but when once the word *Tragicomedy* is prefix'd, the *Catastrophe* is presently known, and the Audience the less concern'd with all the Incidents that trouble the designs of the chief Actors; so that all their *Pathetick* complaints do but weakly move the Spectator, who is prepossessed with an Opinion that all will end well; whereas if we were ignorant of the Event, we should tremble for them, and be likewise more delighted with the return of good Fortune that should deliver them." *The Whole Art of the Stage*. . . . *Written in French by the command of Cardinal Richelieu, by Monsieur Hedelin, Abbot of Aubignac, and now made English.* London, 1684. Book IV, Chap. V, p. 144-5. Cp. above, pp. 4, 7.

⁶⁷ *Advertisement* to play.

⁶⁸ W. P. Ker, I, 212. *A King and No King* had already been considered by Rymer as one of the *Tragedies of the Last Age* (1678).

“Neither is it so trivial an undertaking, to make a tragedy end happily; for ’tis more difficult to save than ’tis to kill. The dagger and the cup of poison are always in a readiness; but to bring the action to the last extremity, and then by probable means to recover all, will require the art and judgment of a writer, and cost him many a pang in the performance.”⁶⁹

With the domain of tragicomedy thus encroached upon by tragedy, the result was that the conception of the former kind—in the minds of the critical at least—became restricted to a play admitting both serious and comic parts,—a feature which, in fact, had always been more or less characteristic of tragicomedy in the past. Dryden’s four later plays of the type are obviously constructed with this notion in mind, and the same is true of others of the period. This conception, furthermore, while making no provision for the character of the *dénouement*, evidently tacitly concedes that the serious plot shall end happily. Dryden is careful to call his “Don Sebastion” (1690) a tragedy, altho it admits as elaborate a comic plot as the “Spanish Friar”; and with only one or two exceptions the title name is never applied in the Restoration period to tragedies of comic admixture.⁷⁰ From first to last thruout the period the idea of tragicomedy as a play of two-fold plot is pretty consistently supported both in theory and practise, and is to be remembered as a heritage that the age passed on to future criticism.⁷¹

⁶⁹ W. P. Ker, I, 249.

⁷⁰ The exceptions are: Mrs. Behn’s *Widow Ranter* (above, p. 178) and an alteration of the first part of Shakspeare’s *Henry IV* attributed to Betterton, *K. Henry IV. with the Humours of Sir John Falstaff. A Tragicomedy. As it is Acted at the Theatre in Little-Lincolns-Inn-Fields By His Majesty’s Servants. Revized, with Alterations. Written Originally by Mr. Shakespear.* London, 1700 (Genest, II, 219). Cp. also a later revision of the same, *K. Henry IV. with the Humours of Sir John Falstaff. A Tragicomedy, By Mr. W. Shakespear.* London, 1721.

⁷¹ In connexion with this chapter it may be noted that Francis Kirkman’s two play lists of the period (the first published with *Tom Tyler and His Wife*, 1661, and the second appended to John Dancer’s *Nicomede*, 1670) are the first in England to indicate the tragicomedies, evidently following printed titles, but full of blunders and generally inaccurate. Langbaine’s first catalog, called *Momus Triumphans* (1688), copies Kirkman’s errors and is equally worthless. He however corrected most of his mistakes of classification in his later *Dramatick Poets* (1691).

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUDING ASPECTS OF ENGLISH TRAGICOMEDY

Little remains to be said of tragicomedy as an independent dramatic species after its last feeble flickerings at the close of the seventeenth century. The forces that made for the gradual extinction of the form on the Restoration stage became only more dominant with the advent of the Augustan era. French classicism, which had secured a firm foothold in the age of Dryden, gained a veritable triumph in the age of Pope. The further separation of tragedy and comedy and the more painful observance of decorum and correctness thus developed, led the eighteenth century to boast as great a critical refinement over the Restoration period as the latter had felt over the Elizabethan. The trend of popular taste further divorced the new century from any interest in romantic tragicomedy. The reaction against the licentiousness of the Restoration stage resulted in a general movement toward a moral and sentimental comedy, in which domestic themes replaced romantic, and middle-class society supplanted royalty. Reason and morality became the standards of literary judgment. In short, every influence tended to preclude the revival of a form whose romantic excesses, unnatural portrayal of life, disregard of poetic justice, defiance of the laws of cause and effect, and other absurdities, proclaimed the relic of a barbarous age. All things considered, then, it is not surprising that tragicomedy was a word almost unknown in eighteenth century drama. To critics it represented a monstrosity safely interred among the crudities of the past; and its riddance was hailed as a credit to the purer taste of the age.¹ As a living growth, traditional

¹ For example, Wm. Cooke, *Elements of Dramatic Criticism* (1775), Chap. XIV: "We are happy, however, in treating of this subject, that we are now speaking of its *manes*; tragi-comedy having left this country (where, we are afraid, it was originally hatched) above half a century ago; for declining, as the present state of the stage is; our taste has, as

tragicomedy had disappeared from the English stage never to return. Its subsequent history is concerned only with the various echoes it aroused in latter-day dramatic practise and critical opinion.

Of the few points of contact between eighteenth century drama and tragicomedy, the most vital perhaps is found in the continued stage popularity of old English plays. Among the persistent revivals of Elizabethan and Restoration favorites thruout the century, old tragicomedies appeared periodically, representing, in fact, the last chapter in the stage history of the form. As in the preceding era, the Beaumont-Fletcher plays were in most favor. The opening years of the century witnessed the presentation of "A King and No King," "Humorous Lieutenant," "Loyal Subject," "Island Princess" and "Woman Pleased," some of which kept the boards thruout the century. In 1711 "Philaster" was successfully performed, after an absence of fifteen years from the stage, and came on again in 1715. Later, George Colman's alteration of the play (1763) marked the beginning of a series of revivals that extended into the nineteenth century. Massinger's "Bondman," slightly altered, was acted 1719 with Betterton in the title role,² and years later a second revision by Cumberland appeared. The growing interest in Shakspeare and the great popularity of his tragedies resulted in repeated revivals of his romances during the latter half of the century. Other Elizabethan tragicomedies as well figured on the late eighteenth century stage in the general revival of romantic interest; while of the Restoration type, Dryden's "Spanish Friar" was a permanent fixture thruout the age.

In spite of this rather considerable interest in romantic tragicomedy, no original pieces of the sort resulted. The few

yet, purity enough to reject this seduction with universal contempt; and we hope, for the credit of posterity, no succeeding age will relapse into a species of the drama, at once so repugnant to all the laws of art as well as nature."

² *The Bond-Man; or Love and Liberty. A Tragi-comedy. As it is now Acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane. By His Majesty's Servants. London. 1719.* The alterations in this edition are attributed to Betterton. Genest, II, 644.

sporadic productions of the century that bear the *genre* name illustrate the form chiefly in the decadent aspects noted in the preceding period. Elkanah Settle's "Siege of Troy" (c. 1703) is the only one of the group that is claimed to have been acted;³ tho Martin Bladen's "Solon: or, Philosophy No Defence against Love" (1705) was evidently intended for the stage and may have some title to serious drama. The other half-dozen are trifles or absurdities of one form or another, and only illustrate the tendency already encountered to apply the title name to illegitimate types of drama.⁴ This decadent use of the term was a natural result of the disappearance of the species itself

³ *The Siege of Troy, a Tragi-Comedy, as it has been often acted with great Applause.* London, n. d. (1703).

⁴ The titles are usually sufficient to indicate the character of the pieces. All may be found in the *Biographia Dramatica*. In chronological order they are:—

Caledonia; or, the Pedlar turn'd Merchant. A Tragi-comedy, As it was Acted by His Majesty's Subjects of Scotland, in the King of Spain's Province of Darien. London: 1700. This is not a play at all but an anonymous verse satire on the Darien expedition.

Ireland Preserv'd; or the Siege of London-Derry. Together with the Troubles of the North. Written by the then Governour (John Michelburne), 2 pts., London, 1705. Part II adds, *A Tragi-comedy.*

The Tragi-Comedy of Joan of Hedington. Scene Hedington. In Imitation of Shakespear. A capricious skit published in the *Useful Miscellanies* of Dr. Wm. King, London, 1712. The prolog states,

Our Play won't make ye Laugh, nor make ye Cry,
For 'tis a perfect Tragi-comedy.

Hoops into Spinning-Wheels. A Tragi-Comedy. Written by a gentleman in Gloucestershire (John Blanch). Gloucester, 1725.

The English Stage Italianiz'd. In a new Dramatic entertainment, called Dido and Æneas; or, Harlequin, a Butler, a Pimp, a Minister of State, Generalissimo, and Lord High Admiral: dead and alive again, and at last crown'd King of Carthage, by Dido. A Tragi-Comedy, after the Italian manner; by way of Essay, or first step towards the farther Improvement of the English Stage. Written by Thomas D'Urfey, Poet Laureat de Jure. London: 1727. This posthumous piece is only a farcical scenario.

The Reign of Hellebore, King of Rien de Tout. A Tragi-Comedy. Printed at York, 1760.

The Spanish *Celestina* was translated and adapted to the English stage, supposedly by J. Savage, in 1707; and the *Pastor Fido* was put into heroic couplets by an anonymous translator in 1736.

from the regular stage. The word recurs here and there throughout the century as a sort of makeshift term of whimsical application.⁵ Quite a number of "tragi-comic farces" appear among the operatic and pantomimic entertainments that sprang up in great numbers during the first half of the century. To such pieces the term was applied in all sorts of grotesque combinations. For example, John Gay entitled his "What d'ye call it?" (1715) a "Tragi-Comi-Pastoral Farce," explaining in the preface that the whole art of such composition lay "in interweaving the several kinds of drama with each other, so that they cannot be distinguished or separated." Accordingly, the piece presents a tragic plot, interlarded with comedy and accompanied with music, the whole intended as a parody on familiar contemporary tragedies. Instances of this sort are common enough in the eighteenth century illegitimate drama, but represent a wide divergence from any integral relation to our subject.

With tragicomedy after 1700 an extinct *genre* in the living drama, an unrecognized name on the regular stage, and a relic of the past in critical opinion, the questions arise, What developed in its stead? what supplied its functions? what occupied the intermediate ground of that which was neither right tragedy nor right comedy? For surely the demand for the play of serious theme and happy ending persisted even in an age that had discarded romantic improbabilities and tragicomic absurdities as contrary to rule and reason. In fact, as the traditional romantic features of the species fell into disuse, its perennial traits became absorbed in the two dramatic forms of classical recognition. Both in tragedy and, more particu-

⁵ Note, for example, the following titles:

The play-house scuffle, or, Passive Obedience kickt off the stage. Being a true relation of a new-tragi-comedy, as it was acted last week at the play-house in Drury-Lane; by several notorious actors, frequently call'd Her Majesties Servants, but of late turn'd their own masters. In two canto's. London. 1710.

Tragi-Comical Reflections, of a Moral and Political Tendancy, occasioned By the Present State of the two Rival Theatres in Drury-Lane and Lincolns-Inn-Fields. By Gabriel Rennet, Esq; London: n. d. (1725).

The History of England, from the Norman Conquest to the present time; or a tragi-comic song, in four parts. By Nathan Withy. Worcester, 1789.

larly, in sentimental comedy, the eighteenth century found recourse for that which tragicomedy had once supplied.

In the first place, the idea already current in England that the term tragedy could include plays of happy catastrophe persisted strongly thruout the eighteenth century, and in critical debate became involved in the question of "poetic justice" lately raised by Rymer, a doctrine on which the professed dictators of correct taste were much at variance. At the beginning of the century, Dennis and Gildon argued for the equal distribution of rewards and punishments in tragedy; the virtuous and innocent should be allowed to triumph and the guilty alone suffer. And Shakspeare's non-observance of this doctrine brought forth their unqualified censure. On the other hand, Addison and Steele as vigorously denounced poetical justice as having "no Foundation in Nature, in Reason, or in the Practice of the Ancients."⁶ Thus critical opinion on this point continued to be divided thruout the century.⁷ In practise, however, poetical justice received a complete vindication. Popular taste favored it; and this—as Pye, a late defender of the doctrine, maintained—constituted the court of last appeal, whose affirmative decree on the question had reversed the dictatorial edict of Addison and his coterie. "The Tragedy of King Lear," he cited in proof, "has always ended with the happiness of Cordelia and the restoration of the old monarch, from the first alteration of it by Tate."⁸ As a matter of fact, the double

Spectator, No. 40. Cp. also, *Tatler*, No. 82.

⁷ The following passage from Goldsmith, *Art of Poetry* (1761), states the situation: "Tragedy is not always to end with the misfortunes of some principal person; for sometimes it may have a happy *Catastrophe*, and sometimes a double one; that is, happy for the *good*, and unhappy for the *guilty*; but the *single* and *unfortunate* Catastrophe is reckoned the best, as it is most likely to produce *terror* and *compassion*.—It is a dispute indeed among the critics, whether *virtue* should *always* be rewarded, and *vice* punished in the Catastrophe of a Tragedy; but the reasons on the negative side seem the strongest." II, 170.

⁸ *A Commentary illustrating the Poetic of Aristotle* (1792), p. 265 ff. The author goes on to express his own preference thus:—"To argue from my own feelings, that arrangement of dramatic fable is at the same time the most affecting, and the most pleasing in which those characters in whose welfare we are strongly interested, after experiencing the greatest distress,

ending resulting from a strict observance of poetic justice is one of the distinctive features of eighteenth century tragedy. Moreover, tragedies of no tragic catastrophe at all became increasingly common. Mere regularity of form might be in itself sufficient to call forth the title; the concluding event, at least, was unessential. An admirable case in point is Colman's alteration of "Philaster" (1763), which is termed a "Tragedy," altho the tragic action is considerably reduced in order to make the hero's conduct more reasonable. The author's defense of the title illustrates the attitude of the age: "If to move the passions of pity and terror are the two chief ends of Tragedy, there needs no apology for giving that title to the play of Philaster. If Lear, Hamlet, Othello, &c. &c. notwithstanding the casual introduction of comick circumstances in the natural course of the action, are tragedies; Philaster is so too."⁹ One road by which tragicomedy disappeared is evident enough.

Secondly, by a corresponding extension of meaning, the term comedy, in its eighteenth century usage, came to encroach as much beyond its traditional bounds. The new moral and sentimental species, which sprang into vogue early in the century in the general reaction against past licentiousness, introduces an interesting sidelight to our subject. Dating in spirit at least from Elizabethan times, sentimental comedy first became a full-blown and consequential type on the English stage in such plays as Colley Cibber's "Careless Husband" (1704) and Richard Steele's "Conscious Lovers" (1722), whence it continued to flourish with vigor thruout the century even after the ridicule of Goldsmith had tempered its popularity. The sentimental and moral treatment of a domestic theme

and while their utter ruin or death seems inevitable, are at once relieved by a sudden revolution of fortune quite unexpected and yet not improbable; and the pleasure received from this will be greatly encreased if the distress of the fable arises from tyranny and oppression, the author of which is involved in ruin by the peripetia. Such an arrangement will both excite pity and terror, and the catastrophe will be still agreeable to our feelings. This form is exemplified in the Wife for a Month of Beaumont and Fletcher, the Marriage A-la-Mode of Dryden, the Grecian Daughter, and above all in the fourth act of the Merchant of Venice."

⁹ *Advertisement*.

wherein suffering abounded and virtue triumphed became the established basis of the species. This introduction of the graver elements of pathos and morality into comedy naturally resulted in a more serious type of play. Comedy no longer furnished fun and amusement, but stirred the deeper emotions of pity and sorrow and called forth the love of virtue. The sentimental type, indeed, may be well described as a kind of intermediate between tragedy and comedy. In its more serious presentations of social life it is but a step removed from the type of domestic tragedy that Heywood and others had essayed in the Elizabethan period and Lillo revived in the eighteenth century. The "London Merchant" (1731), in its problematic theme, penitent sinner and morally satisfactory ending, only echoes the "English Traveller" and the "Witch of Edmonton."

A brief indication of the distinctive character of sentimental comedy—or *comédie larmoyante*, as it was known in France¹⁰—is sufficient to show its generic resemblance to tragicomedy. It presented an essential serious interest and at the same time catered to the love of the happy ending. Moreover, amid prevailing gravity, it almost invariably introduced some comic element. But beyond such general similitudes, parallels between the two types languish. Tragicomedy, accepted in its traditional sense, connoted something very different from the later species. Its scenes are in fanciful realms remote from actuality; its actions compass the fates of kingdoms as well as lovers; its leading personages are the monarchs and heroes of romance; it presents an exaggerated portrayal of character, a tangled web of incident, and solves its dilemmas as fancy and not truth directs. From traits of this sort it is a goodly drop to the prosaic features of sentimental comedy: its sorrows and sufferings of middle-class English society, its truer representation of life, its social problems, and its emphasis on moral lessons and virtuous conduct. With the thrills, the hair-breadth escapes from death, and the general theatricality of tragicomedy, it has nothing to do. Financial ruin, virtue in

¹⁰ For a discussion of the subject in France, see G. Lanson, *Nicelle de La Chaussée et la Comédie Larmoyante* (1887).

distress, marital troubles—make up its stock in trade of seriousness. Whereas tragicomedy might arouse both pity and terror and temper all with a happy ending; sentimental comedy could stir pity alone, and its final reconciliation falls far short of the stage effectiveness of its romantic predecessor. The happy *dénouement* is usually foreshadowed far in advance. As in modern melodrama, there is never a doubt but that Fortune is on the side of young love and virtue. For one set of dramatic falsities, sentimental comedy substituted only another.

It is plain, then, that there is scant lineal relation between the two forms. Sentimental comedy was in no sense a continuation of tragicomedy, tho it developed in time to take the place in popular favor vacated by the latter, and for that reason deserves some notice. By subservience to the happy ending, it fell short of tragedy; yet it abused the name of comedy. Its intermediate scope is well put by Diderot in commenting on his own "*Le Fils Naturel*" (1757), a play of the type. To a query as to the classification of the piece, he replied that it belonged to *le genre sérieux*, which he described as a medial form lying between tragedy and comedy, which had the advantage of being able to draw from both, while they were restricted within prescribed bounds.¹¹ Serious drama it was, and as such it suggests the manner in which something akin to tragicomedy has been represented on the stage to the present day.

Strangely enough, by the sanction of critical opinion, eighteenth century comedy was allowed to range almost at will. It might admit the graver elements of tragedy *ad libitum* and still be comedy. Even the classical Voltaire would deny no liberties to this species: with equal propriety it might be entirely jocose, or a mixture of seriousness and pleasantry, or,

¹¹ *Troisième Entretien* appended to *Le Fils Naturel* (*Œuvres*—ed. 1821—IV, 184 ff.). With the usual critical view of tragicomedy, he goes on to comment on that *genre* as follows: "Vous voyez que la tragi-comédie ne peut être qu'un mauvais genre, parce qu'on y confond deux genres éloignés et séparés par une barrière naturelle. On n'y passe point par des nuances imperceptibles; on tombe à chaque pas dans les contrastes, et l'unité disparaît." *Ibid.*, p. 187.

indeed, *toute serieuse*.¹² On the other hand, no such license was allowed tragedy. The slightest admixture of levity brought down an avalanche of critical opprobrium from the self-constituted champions of true taste. The result was that practically no eighteenth century tragedy, in England at least, admitted comedy; and comic portions were even cut out of many of the old stock plays. For that particular violation of decorum in the tragedies of the past, those of Shakspeare especially, critics had no condemnation strong enough.¹³ It was decried as a practise contrary to art, taste, and the authority of the ancients, and one for which there was no defense. Moreover, the introduction of levity in a tragic theme was universally hailed as tragicomedy, which brings up the whole question of the critical side of the subject in the eighteenth century, the most interesting aspect of its posthumous history.

To the growing interest in Shakspeare that the various editions of his work and the stage popularity of his plays aroused all thru the century, is largely due the numerous learned opinions on tragicomedy that accompany the criticism of the age. An examination of the faults and virtues of the great Elizabethan disclosed that he had mingled tragic and comic, or, in other words, had been guilty of tragicomedy. This, in turn, revealed that the same had characterized the age, and, in fact, that the stage had been but lately purified of this barbarous practise. Almost all critics had something to say on the subject: most condemned the mixed species utterly; a few had the temerity to defend it. Some echoed the Restoration opinion of its English origin; others declared it belonged to a far earlier period. But as to what constituted tragicomedy all were agreed.

The very first utterances on the subject introduce the points at issue and forecast the general trend of future opinion. Nicholas Rowe, the first of a long line of Shaksperian editors,

¹² See preface to the *Enfant Prodigue* (1738).

¹³ This aspect of eighteenth century criticism is treated at length in Professor Lounsbury's *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (1901), Chap. IV, much of which is pertinent to our subject.

in accord with the prevailing classicism, declared of his author's work :

"His Plays are properly to be distinguish'd only into Comedies and Tragedies. Those which are called Histories, and even some of his Comedies, are really Tragedies, with a run or mixture of Comedy amongst 'em. That way of Trage-comedy was the common mistake of that age, and is indeed become so agreeable to the *English* taste, that tho' the severer Critiques among us cannot bear it, yet the generality of our audiences seem to be better pleas'd with it than with an exact Tragedy."¹⁴

Two years later, 1711, Addison, writing in the "*Spectator*," more nearly expressed the extreme classicist's abhorrence of the form :

"The Tragi-Comedy, which is the Product of the *English* Theatre, is one of the most monstrous Inventions that ever entered into a Poet's Thoughts. An Author might as well think of weaving the Adventures of *Æneas* and *Hudibras* into one Poem, as of writing such a motly Piece of Mirth and Sorrow. But the Absurdity of these Performances is so very visible, that I shall not insist upon it."¹⁵

With opinions of this sort the contemporary criticism of Dennis and Gildon accorded in the main. Neither was a thorough classicist, yet neither had anything to offer in favor of tragicomedy. Dennis, however, vigorously denied Addison's claim that the form was an English invention¹⁶—a point which Gildon had earlier contested in connexion with Dryden's similar assertion.¹⁷ The latter critic, moreover, while admitting that the ill-advised union of grief and laughter, "what is done so commonly among us in our *Tragi-Comedies*," was an absurdity that even Shakspeare had been

¹⁴ *Some account of the Life, etc. of Mr. William Shakespear*, 1709 (D. N. Smith, *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespeare*, 1903, p. 10).

¹⁵ *Spectator*, No. 40, April 16, 1711.

¹⁶ "He is vilely mistaken if he thinks that Tragi-Comedy is of the Growth of our English Theatres." *Letters, familiar, moral and critical* (1712), p. 407.

¹⁷ "We did not invent *Tragicomedy*, as is plain from the Prologue of *Plautus* to his *Amphitryo* (Quotes). Nay this unnatural Mixture was even before *Tragedy* was in Perfection; that is in the Infancy of the Stage in both *Athens* and *Rome*; till rejected and the Stage reformed from it by the greatest Wits and Poets of these Cities, as a Mixture wholly monstrous and unnatural." *Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear*, in Rowe's edition (1710), VII, 431.

guilty of, protested Rowe's observation that such mixtures pleased better than tragedies. For, excepting Shakspeare's, "we have not for some Years past had any of the kind on the Stage, which have pleas'd; The *Fatal Marriage* and *Oroonoko* are the last, that I can remember"¹⁸—a statement significant in more ways than one.

On the theory of tragicomedy, however, unanimity prevailed. The above utterances suggest the ideas that the eighteenth century had come to associate with the term. It evidently could denote either of two different styles of composition, between which the lines of demarcation were not always clear: First, the haphazard mixture of mirth and gravity, which Shakspeare's want of art had led him to practise, and which was usually condoned as the fault of his age;¹⁹ and second, the union of two distinct plots, one comic and one serious, which Dryden and his contemporaries had popularized in the Restoration era. Beyond these bounds, the eighteenth century critical view of tragicomedy never strayed. Under the first heading, hardly an Elizabethan play, strictly speaking, was exempt from the opprobrious classification.²⁰ Shakspeare's tragedies especially, when unpurged of their comic admixture, fell under the ban; even "Hamlet" was rated by

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 437; and, *Essay on the Art, Rise and Progress of the Stage in Greece, Rome and England*, *Ibid.*, pp. ix, lxvii. Cp. also the same author's *Laws of Poetry* (1721), p. 25.

¹⁹ For example, Lord Lyttelton, *Dialogues of the Dead* (1760), Dialogue XIV: "The strange mixture of tragedy, comedy, and farce in the same play, nay sometimes in the same scene, I acknowledge to be quite excusable. But this was the taste of the times when Shakespeare wrote"; also, Pye, in the same connexion, *Commentary illustrating the Poetic of Aristotle* (1792), p. 127: "That the necessity of committing this fault was imposed on him by the taste of the public, is apparent, from the practice of all the contemporary writers, and if he has contrived to do it with less impropriety than others, it surely is no small degree of merit."

²⁰ One critic went so far as to declare that the compositions of that period were so heterogeneous that they could not even be properly called tragicomedies, but were cautiously denominated plays. *Critical Reflections on the Old English Dramatick Writers. Extracted from a Prefatory Discourse to the new Edition of Massinger's Works* (Anon.), 1761, I, p. xxxi.

some a tragicomedy.²¹ But it was rather the play of double plot, which dated from the later period, that was regarded as the full-blown form of the species.²² The basis of this conception of tragicomedy the age had inherited from the preceding era, but in the general growth of critical feeling had extended beyond its original bounds. The mere presence of a comic sub-plot, regardless of the *dénouement* of the serious interest, was enough to define the type. Hence, "Venice Preserved," "Fatal Marriage," "Oroonoko," and other previous tragedies of the sort were all tragicomedies in the eighteenth century,^{22a} as well as the "Spanish Friar" and "Love Triumphant." It was by such abuses of the *genre* title that the critical view of tragicomedy became completely detached from any foundation in the stage tradition of the form. That the Duke of Buckingham should have entitled his alteration of "Philaster" a tragicomedy, was evidently a matter for comment at the time of Colman; for "that word," the latter explained, "according to its present acceptation, conveys the idea of a very different species of composition; a play like the Spanish Friar, or Oroonoko, in which two distinct actions, one serious and the other comick, are unnaturally woven together."²³

The unnaturalness and absurdity of the practise few failed

²¹ For example, see Stevens's letter to Garrick on the latter's altered version of *Hamlet*. *Garrick Correspondence*, I, 451.

²² To quote Pye, *A Commentary, etc.*, p. 127 ff.: "However faulty the practice of the age of Shakespear may have been in this respect (mingling kinds), it was reserved for the next, though proud of their encreasing refinement, to produce that monster of the drama, the regular tragi-comedy; where two distinct fables, the one distressful, the other ridiculous, were carried on together; not only violating the unity of action, but making so absurd a mixture of sorrow and mirth, that as Addison observes, a poet might as well think of weaving the adventures of Æneas and Huldibras into one poem. . . . The error of Shakespear is like that of Homer, in introducing Thersites in a serious poem, but the tragi-comedy resembles the Iliad and Margites, mixed together." Cp. also John Penn, *Letters on the Drama* (1796), Letter IX.

^{22a} For example, compare Gildon, above, p. 198.

²³ Advertisement to *Philaster, a Tragedy* (1763), altered by Geo. Colman from Beaumont and Fletcher.

to dwell on at length. In accepted critical opinion such a procedure represented the worst possible violation of decorum; it outraged the canons of classical usage and correct taste; it was an insult to art. The specific points urged against the form were only those of the past renewed and amplified. The chief ground of complaint seemed to be the dissonant emotional effect that tragicomedy was supposed to create in the mind of the spectator. According to the fallacious reasoning of the day, tragedy and comedy introduced together produced impressions that mutually destroyed each other and left the mind in a state of confusion. Thus Gildon emphatically contested Dryden's early arguments maintaining the propriety and excellence of the mixed species. The soul that can respond to the swift transitions of tragicomedy, he argued, and "start from Tears to Laughter, and from Laughter to Tears, five times in one Play, . . . must be like some Childrens and Womens who can weep and laugh in a Breath." And as to the question of agreeable relief afforded by the "unnatural Mixture," one might as well think of acting a tragedy and a comedy together, which no one could think a perfection. "And yet," he added, "most if not all of our Modern Tragicomedies are even as if a *Tragedy* and *Comedy* was acted together; the *Comic* Part of them having no more to do with or Relation to the *Tragic*, than if it were another Play."²⁴ The learned Oxford lecturer, Joseph Trapp, who viewed the form in the light of its classical ancestry, arrived at much the same conclusions. Since contrary passions counteracted each other, what was more absurd, he urged, than a play whereby the mind was continually distraught between sorrow and joy; adding the reflection that whereas ancient tragicomedy was absurd enough in joining characters of contrary station, its modern prototype had gone further in uniting serious and trivial events as well.²⁵ Much later in the century, William Cooke, who devoted a chapter of his "Elements of Dramatic

²⁴ *Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear* (1710), Rowe's ed., VII, 432 ff.

²⁵ *Praelectiones Poeticae, Oxonii*: 1719, III, 4-5. The first edition appeared in 1711.

Criticism" (1775) to the subject,²⁶ reiterated the impossibility of laughing and crying together, and as to the unity of action violated by tragicomedy, merely repeated the words put into the mouth of Lisideius a century before.²⁷ These same strictures—the weakened and unnatural effect produced by tragicomedy and its infraction of the unity of action—were echoed later again at the close of the century in John Penn's "Letters on the Drama" (1796),²⁸ and, in fact, may be considered the stock objections urged against the practise thruout the representative criticism of the age.

In a century thus generally hostile to tragicomedy, the few attempts to justify that manner of composition are conspicuous by their very audacity. No one, indeed, could deny the illegitimacy of the species according to the rules of criticism; yet no one, on the other hand, could deny the perennial popularity of Shakspeare and the fidelity of his plays of the sort to actual life, if not to art. Colley Cibber was perhaps the first to suggest that mirth judiciously introduced into tragedy might be reckoned a positive beauty; but such liberties he limited to the sphere of the chosen few.²⁹ It was reserved for Dr. Johnson to voice an actual defense of the practise. Writing in the "Rambler" in 1751,³⁰ he gave as his opinion that one

²⁶ *The Elements of Dramatic Criticism. Containing an analysis of the stage under the following heads, Tragedy, Tragi-Comedy, Comedy, Pantomime, and Farce. By William Cooke, 1775. Chap. XIV, Of Tragi-Comedy.*

²⁷ Cp. the following passage with the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy* (Ker ed., I, 57): "One of the great requisites both of tragedy and comedy, is unity of action; now, in a tragicomedy, there are *two* distinct actions carrying on together, to the perplexity of the audience, who, before they are well engaged in the concernments of one part, are diverted to another, and by those means, espouse the interest of neither: from hence likewise arises another inconvenience equally as absurd, which is, that one half of the characters of the play are not known to each other; they keep their distances like the *Mountagues* and the *Capulets*, and seldom begin an acquaintance till the last scene of the fifth act, when they all meet upon the stage to wind up their own stories."

²⁸ Letter IX, *On Tragi-comedy*.

²⁹ *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, Comedian, written by himself* (1740), R. W. Lowe ed., 1889, I, 123.

³⁰ No. 156.

who proposed to regard no other laws than those of nature, would be inclined to receive tragicomedy to his protection. "For what is there in the mingled drama," he asks, "which impartial reason can condemn? The connexion of important with trivial incidents, since it is not only common but perpetual in the world, may surely be allowed upon the stage, which pretends only to be the mirror of life." Not only the example of nature but experience supports the practise; for "is it not certain that the tragic and comic affectations have been moved alternately with equal force; and that no plays have oftener filled the eye with tears, and the breast with palpitation, than those which are variegated with interludes of mirth?" Yet Johnson's justification was not unqualified. He would not vindicate tragicomedy by the success of Shakspeare; he would rather regard its successful achievement by that poet as a further proof of his transcendent genius; and perhaps even Shakspeare, he added, might have been yet greater had he left this mode of composition untried. Later he repeated much the same argument, admitting the mingled drama to be contrary to the rules of criticism, but grounding its defense in nature and proclaiming it a more faithful picture of life than either tragedy or comedy.³¹

Whereas Johnson defended tragicomedy on abstract grounds, Sir Joshua Reynolds found a justification for the practise in the old plea of its appeal to popular taste. "The criticks who renounce tragi-comedy as barbarous," he declared, "speak more from notions which they have formed in their closets, than any well-built theory deduced from experience of what pleases or displeases, which ought to be the foundation of all rules." In his opinion, the critical judgment of the day assumed a refinement on the part of the popular audience that did not exist; and so long as this state prevailed and the human passion for the variety and contrarieties of tragicomedy persisted, a dramatic work should use every means to contribute to that end.³² But positions of this sort were practically

³¹ *Preface to Shakespear*, 1768 (D. N. Smith, *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakespear*, p. 118 ff.).

³² See *The Plays of William Shakspeare*, ed. of 1793, annotated by Sam'l Johnson and Geo. Stevens, I, 49 n.

untenable in an age that had declared for art pure and undefiled. Only one or two other voices echoed the opinions of Johnson and Reynolds. Horace Walpole, in the preface to the second edition (1765) of his "Castle of Otranto," professed his inability to understand why occasional pleasantry ought any more to be banished from tragedy, than pathetic seriousness from comedy. And it seems that the Monthly Reviewers, on one occasion at least, offered a partial defense of tragic-comedy. Pye's unqualified censure of the species they declared a "rash anathema," observing that such a play as the "Tempest" so nearly realized the perfect union of a solemn and a ludicrous fable into one inseparable whole, that a "tragic comedy" could not but seem practicable. And they were further of the opinion that complete transitions of temper might be accomplished if unity of manners were preserved, as evidenced by the sentimental dramas of the day.³³ All eighteenth century critics, however, whether denouncing or defending tragic-comedy, were treating of a mode of composition that might include almost any play of the past age, from a tragedy of blood like "Hamlet" to a romance like the "Tempest"; and in this respect, their arguments either for or against are somewhat beside the point. One last aspect of the critical interest in the mingled drama is more vitally connected with the subject.

³³ *Monthly Review*, Oct., 1795, XVIII, 123. Cp. a much later defense of the species in an article on *Dryden's Dramatic Works* by H. Southern, published in the *Retrospective Review*, 1820, I, 160: "We are very far from being of the faction, who would hunt down tragi-comedy as a monster, to which criticism should give no quarter: on the contrary, we are disposed to think that it is the only species of the drama, which is calculated to afford a just description of human life. There—all is not gloom—nor all sunshine—pleasant smiling vallies peep forth amidst utter desolation, the dreariest waste and the most inaccessible rocks neighbour a fertile soil; as the ripe and blushing strawberry frequently pillows itself on a bed of snow, by the side of which it often grows on the lofty mountains of Switzerland. All is unequal, all diversified. The hero of the court may be the hero of the tavern, and the armed warrior who kills his thousands, may scare pacific passengers in the streets in his drunken frolics. In this light, Shakespear saw man, and his tragi-comedy is merely the history of human life."

Whence tragicomedy had taken its inception was a question that first received serious attention in the eighteenth century. Dryden and others of his time had proclaimed the species an invention of the English theater, and the more dogmatic of the Augustans were content to accept the same judgment. Critics of more historical point of view, however, were far from concurring. Even Dennis and Gildon, at the beginning of the century, had challenged this theory. The latter had shown by the evidence of Plautus the existence of tragicomedy in classical times, and Trapp had offered additional data in support of the same view.³⁴ Later, the growing historical interest in the modern drama led others to arrive at an idea of the medieval origin of tragicomedy. Bishop Warburton, in speaking of the early morality and farce, declared that the English theater, by jumbling together these two forms, had "begot in an evil hour, that mungrel Species, unknown to Nature and Antiquity, called *Tragi-Comedy*."³⁵ Another student of the drama traced the species to the fact that ancient tragedy, when originally revived on the English stage, became straightway debased with low comedy to delight the populace.³⁶ And, at the beginning of the next century, Coleridge—whose conception of tragicomedy was evidently that of his predecessors—attributed the origin of the form to the necessity always characteristic of the English stage of at once instructing and gratifying the people, whence the devil and the vice in the early religious drama, and the fool or clown on the modern

³⁴ *Prælectiones Poeticæ* (1719), III, 4: "Scio à doctissimo *Vossio* de antiquorum *prætextatis* & *togatis* disserente hæc adnotari. (Institut. Poet., Lib. III, Cap. VII.) 'Erant & mixtæ ex *prætextatis*, & *togatis*; quæ *tabernariæ* appellabantur: ubi personæ *prætextatæ* cum *togatis* jungerentur. *Festus* in *Schedis Pomponii* leti: *Togatarum duplex genus: prætextatarum, hominum fastigio; quæ sic appellantur, quod togis prætextis romp. administrant: tabernariorum, quia hominibus excellentibus etiam humiles permixti. &c.* Ex his liquet, si *prætextatæ* fabulæ quodammodo erant *Tragædiæ*; *togatæ* autem *Comædiæ*: *Tabernariam* (quæ mixti erat argumenti) fuisse, ut *Plautus* vocat, *Tragico-comædiam* &c. Ejusmodi est *Amphitryo* *Plautina*, & *Græcorum Hercules Licymnius*."

³⁵ Warburton, ed. of Shakespear (1747), V, 344. Cp. also, Bishop Percy, *An Essay on the Origin of the English Stage* (1767), p. 15 of 1793 ed.

³⁶ Thos. Hawkins, *The Origin of the English Drama* (1773), I, p. ix.

stage.³⁷ Such observations mark the initial historical attention that tragicomedy received in England, and have some interest as playing a part in heralding the approach of the scientific method of literary investigation.³⁸

It is chiefly in the field of criticism that tragicomedy has any claim to attention after 1700. On the stage, we have seen that it was practically an unknown species from the beginning of the century. Altered conditions and tastes relegated its romantic extravagances among outworn fashions, while its place as intermediate drama was usurped both by tragedy and comedy. Much the same situation prevailed thruout the century. Tragicomedy was never revived as a stage type,³⁹ tho analogies similar to those traced between the *genre* and senti-

³⁷ *Literary Remains*, see *Works* (ed. of Prof. Shedd, 1853), IV, 33. It may be noted that Coleridge favorably defines the type: "Tragi-comedy, or a representation of human events more lively, nearer the truth, and permitting a larger field of moral instruction, a more ample exhibition of the recesses of the human heart, under all the trials and circumstances that most concern us, than was known or guessed at by Æschylus, Sophocles, or Euripides."

³⁸ Perhaps the first real historical consideration of tragi-comedy is contained in Walker's *Revival of the Drama in Italy* (1805), in which the author takes occasion to note various landmarks in the early history of the form, and shows that it was not only cultivated by the ancients but first revived in modern times by the Italians. See pp. 54, 262.

³⁹ A few instances of the use of the title name date from the early nineteenth century, but have no vital significance. They may be briefly listed below; none were ever acted:—

The Key of the Garden, A Tragi-Comedy. By Serj. Young, Dundee, 1801.

The Wife With Two Husbands: A Tragi-Comedy, in Three Acts. Translated from the French (of Pixérécourt), by Miss Gunning, London: 1803.

The Theatric Count, a Tragic Comedy, in five acts: from the Orgoglio Cupitoso, Conte teatrino, of Gonzago Bicchieri. Adapted for representation on the English Stage. London, 1809. See *Biographia Dramatica*.

The Wife's Trial; or, The Intruding Widow. A Dramatic Poem. Founded on Mr. Crabbe's Tale of "The Confidant," By C. Lamb. (Published in *Blackwood's Mag.*, Dec., 1828.) Lamb in his letters refers to this piece as a tragicomedy, doubtless led to do so by his acquaintance with Elizabethan drama. The play turns on a serious domestic situation and ends happily. See *Works* (E. V. Lucas, 1903), VII, 735, 738, 747.

It may be added that a few contemporary pieces of the illegitimate drama were denominated *Serio-Comic*.

mental comedy might be found in much of the later eighteenth century drama. The approach of the Romantic movement created a reawakened interest in the Elizabethans and a return to favor of thrills and terrors, baffled villains and successful heroes and heroines. These new romantic tendencies, appropriated chiefly by the now flourishing "illegitimate" drama, resulted in much that is reminiscent of the older drama—the use of familiar motives and devices, striving for theatrical effect, the happy solution of difficulties, and other tragicomic measures,—all of which is seen to good advantage in the dramatic medleys of George Colman the younger and his coterie. And something similar might be said of the French importation of *mélodrame*, which began its long ascendancy in England at the opening of the nineteenth century.

With these later aspects of the drama, however, we have little to do. As in the case of sentimental comedy, they merely serve to show how the stage has never lacked for something intermediate between tragedy and comedy. English tragic-comedy, properly so-called, had long since run its course. A product of mingled medieval and Renaissance tradition, it first came into full-blown existence on the English stage in the work of Beaumont and Fletcher. During the years of their ascendent influence it flourished with ever increasing vigor, degenerating into a definite and conventional type, which by 1642 was the dominant stage form. Kept alive during the era of closed theaters, it emerged in 1662, and, little modified in form or materials, continued to maintain itself on the Restoration stage. But its heyday was over. Beset by classicism and at variance with popular taste, it steadily waned in popularity, and, before the advent of the Augustan era, had come to a full stop. Such in brief is the course of English tragic-comedy, an extinct dramatic kind.

APPENDIX

A LIST OF ENGLISH TRAGICOMEDIES

The following list is an alphabetical arrangement of the English tragicomedies considered in the preceding pages, including all plays that offer any documentary evidence for their *genre* classification and such other contemporary pieces as fulfil or approximate the conditions of the type form. The titles are reproduced from the earliest editions, and are quoted in full or with slight omissions; additional information is put in brackets. The date given represents, of course, the year of printing, and the place of publication is London unless otherwise stated. Non-extant tragicomedies are printed in italics.

The Abdicated Prince: or, the Adventures of Four Years. A Tragi-Comedy, As it was lately Acted at the Court at Alba Regalis, By several Persons of Great Quality. (Anon.) 1690.

Adrasta: or, The Womans Spleene, And Loves Conqvst. A Tragi-comedie. Never Acted. (John Jones.) 1635.

The Adventures of Five Hours. A Tragi-Comedy.—*Non ego Ventosæ Plebis suffragia venor.* Horat. Fr. 21°. (Sir Samuel Tuke.) 1662.

Aggrippa King of Alba: or, The False Tiberinus. As it was several times Acted with great Applause before his Grace the Duke of Ormond then Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, at the Theatre Royal in Dublin. From the French of Monsieur Quinault. (John Dancer.) 1675.

○ Aglaura. (Sir John Suckling.) 1638.

○ Alexander and Campaspe. See Campaspe.

Alfrede or Right Reinthron'd. Being a Tragi-comedie. 1659. (Dedicated to Lady Blount by her brother R. K. A MS. in the Bodleian Library.)

- All Mistaken; Or The Mad Couple. A Comedy, Acted by His Majestyes Servants, at the Theatre Royal. Written by the Honorable James Howard, Esq. 1672.
- The Comickall Historie of Alphonsus, King of Aragon, As it hath bene sundrie times Acted. Made by R. G. (Robert Greene). 1599.
- Alvredus sive Alfredus, Tragico-Comœdia ter exhibita in seminario Anglorum Duaceno ab ejusdem collegii Juventute, Anno Domini M.D C.XIX. Authore Guilielmo Dureo nobili Anglo. Duaci. 1620.
- The Amazon Queen; or the Amours of Thalestris to Alexander the Great. A Tragi-Comedy. (Never acted.) By Jo. Weston Esq. Licensed Febr. 11, 1666-7. Roger L'Estrange. Printed 1667.
- The Amorous Warre A Tragi-Comœdy. (Jasper Mayne, D.D.) 1648.
- The Amourous Fantasme, A Tragi-comedy. By Sr. William Lower Knight. Hage, 1660 (translated from the "Fantome Amoureux" of Philippe Quinault).
- A new Tragickall Comedie of Apius and Virginia, Wherein is liuely expressed a rare example of the vertue of Chastitie, by Virginias constancy. in wishing rather to be slaine at her owne Fathers handes, than to be deflowred of the wicked Iudge Apius. By R. B. (Richard Bower). 1575.
- Arabia Sitiens, or a Dreame of a Drye Yeare, a tragi-comœdy. By William Percy. 1601 (Percy MS. No. 2. Duke of Northumberland's Library).
- Arviragus and Philicia. As it was acted at the Private House in Black-Fryers by his Majesties Servants. The first and second Part. (Lodowick Carlell.) 1639.
- The Bashful Lover. A Tragi-Comedy. As it hath been often Acted at the Private-House in Black-Friers, by His late Majesties Servants, with great Applause. Written by Philip Messenger, Gent. 1655.
- Basileia seu Bellum Grammaticale Tragico-Comœdia. Sub ferias Nativitatis acta, a Generosis Scholæ Craneburgensis alumnis. An. 1666. . . . Samuel Hoadley His

Book 1667. (B.M. Add. Mss. 22725. See The Warr of Grammar.)

○ The first part of Bellamira her Dream: or, the Love of Shadows. A Tragi-Comedy, The Scene Naples and Sicily. Written in Venice, by Thomas Killigrew. 1663.

♥ The second part of Bellamira her Dream: or, the Love of Shadows. A Tragi-Comedy, The Scene Naples and Sicily. Written in Venice, by Thomas Killigrew. 1663.

Bellum Grammaticale sive Nominum Verbumque discordia civilis Tragico-Comœdia Summo cum applausu olim apud Oxoniensis in Scœnam producta et nunc in omnium ad Grammaticam animos appellunt oblectamentum edita Londini Excudebant B.A. & T. Fawcet Impensis Joh: Spenceri. 1635. (MS. in Bodleian Library. See Bolte, *Andrea Guarnas Bellum Grammaticale und Seine Nachahmungen*, Berlin, 1908, p. 106 ff.)

Belphegor: or, The Marriage of the Devil; A Tragi-Comedy. Lately acted at the Queen's Theatre in Dorset-Garden. By Mr. Wilson. 1691.

The Black Prince. (Printed with Tryphon as) Two New Tragedies; The first Acted at the Theatre-Royal, by his Majestie's Servants; The other By his Highness the Duke of York's Servants. Both Written by the Right Honourable the Earl of Orrery. 1669. (Entered in Term Catalogues Nov. 22, 1669, as "A Tragi-Comedy.")

The Bloody Duke; or the Adventures for a Crown. A Tragi-Comedy, As it was Acted at the Court at Alba Regalis, By several Persons of Great Quality. Written by the Author of the Abdicated Prince. 1690.

○ The Bond-Man: An Antient Storie. As it hath been often Acted with good allowance, at the Cock-pit in Drury-lane: by the most Excellent Princesse, the Lady Elizabeth her Seruants. By Philip Massinger. 1624.

The Bond-Man: or Love and Liberty. A Tragi-comedy. As it is now Acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane. By His Majesty's Servants. 1719. (Altered from Massinger by Thomas Betterton.)

○ Campaspe, Played beefore the Queenes Maiestie on newyeares

day at night, by her Maiesties Children and the Children of Paules. (John Lyly.) 1584. (Ed. of 1591, "A tragicall Comedie of Alexander and Campaspe.")

The Careles Shepherdess. A Tragi-Comedy Acted before the King & Queen, And at Salisbury-Court, with great Applause. Written by T. G. (Thomas Goffe). Mr. of Arts. With an Alphebetically Catalogue of all such Plays that ever were Printed. 1656.

Celestina: or, the Spanish Bawd. A Tragi-Comedy. Taken from the Spanish Play of Mateo Aleman, Author of Guzman. Reduc'd from 21, as it is in the Original, to 5 Acts; and adapted to the English Stage. (J. Savage?) 1707.

○ A Challenge for Beautie. As it hath beene sundry times Acted, By the Kings Majesties Servants: At the Blackefriers, and at the Globe on the Banke-side. Written by Thomas Heywood. 1636.

○ Christvs Redivivvs, Comœdia Tragica, sacra et noua. Authore Nicolao Grimoaldo. Discite Iusticiam Moniti. Coloniz Ioan. Gymnicus excudebat, Anno M.D.XLIII. (See Pub. Mod. Lang. Assn., 1899, XIV.)

The first part of Cicilia & Clorinda, or, Love in Arms. A Tragi-Comedy, The Scene Lombardy. Written in Turin by Thomas Killigrew. 1663.

The second part of Cicilia & Clorinda, or, Love in Arms. A Tragi-Comedy, The Scene Lombardy. Written in Florence by Thomas Killigrew. 1663.

The Cid. A Tragi comedy, out of French made English: And acted before their Majesties at Court, and on the Cockpit Stage in Drury-lane by the servants to both their Majesties. (Joseph Rutter.) 1637. (The Second Part followed in 1640.)

○ The City-Night-Cap: Or, Crede quod habes, & habes. A Tragi-Comedy. By Robert Davenport. As it was Acted with great Applause, by Her Majesties Servants, at the Phoenix in Drury Lane. 1661.

Claracilla (With The Prisoners). Two Tragæ-Comedies. As they were presented at the Phoenix in Drury-Lane, by her M^{ties} Servants. Written by Tho. Killigrew, Gent. 1641.

- The Comical Revenge: or, Love in a Tub. Acted at His Highness The Duke of York's Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. (George Etherege.) 1664.
- The Coronation, A Comedy. (James Shirley and John Fletcher.) 1640.
- The Court Secret, a Tragi-comedy: Never acted, But prepared for the Scene at Black-Friers. Written by James Shirley. Never printed before. 1653.
- Craftie Cromwell, Or, Oliver ordering our New State. A tragi-comedie. Wherein is discovered the trayterous undertakings and proceedings of the said Nol, and his levelling crew. Written by Mercurius Melancholicus. Printed in the yeare, 1648.
- The Second part of Crafty Crumwell; or Oliver in his glory as king. A Trage Commedie Wherein is presented, the late treasonable undertakings, and proceedings, of the Rebels, their murthuring of Capt. Burley, with their underhand workings to betray their King. Written by Marcurius Pragmaticus. Printed in the yeare, 1648.
- Cromwell's Conspiracy. A tragedy-comedy, relating to our latter times. Beginning at the death of King Charles the First, and ending with the happy restauration of King Charles the Second. Written by a Person of Quality. 1660.
- Custom of the Country. (John Fletcher.) 1647.
- The Tragedie of Cymbeline. William Shakespeare. 1623.—
- The excellent Comedie of two the moste faithfullest Freendes, Damon and Pithias. Newly Imprinted, as the same was shewed before the Queenes Maiestie, by the Children of her Graces Chappell, except the Prologue that is somewhat altered for the proper vse of them that hereafter shall haue occasion to plaie it, either in Priuate, or open Audience. Made by Maister Edwards, then beyng Maister of the Children. 1571. (In the author's prolog, "a tragicall comedie.")
- The Deseruing Favourite. As it was lately Acted, first before the Kings Maiestie, and since publikely at the Black-Friers. By his Maiesties Seruants. Written by Lodowicke Carlell, Esquire, Gentle-man of the Bowes, and

- Groome of the King and Queenes Priuie Chamber. 1629.
(Ed. of 1659, "A Tragi-Comedy.")
- ☞ The Deuils Law-case. Or, When Women goe to Law, the Deuill is full of Businesse. A new Tragecomædy. The true and perfect Copie from the Originall. As it was approuedly well Acted by her Maiesties Seruants. Written by Iohn Webster. 1623.
- Diana's Grove; or, the Faithfull Genius. A tragi-comedy. (Before 1603. Anon., and never acted. A MS. in private hands. See Halliwell, and Fleay.)
- The play of Dicke of Devonshire; a Tragi-Comedy. c. 1636. (Anon. Eg, MS. 1994. Bullen, *Old Plays*, v. 2.)
- The Distresses. Sr. William Davenant Kt. 1673.
- The Divine Comedian or the Right Use of Plays, Improved, in a sacred Tragy-Comædy. (With a subordinate title, The Souls Warfare.) By Rich. Tuke. 1672. .
- ☉ The Doubtful Heir, a Tragi-comedie, as it was Acted in the private House in Black-Friers, Written by James Shirley. Never printed before. 1652.
- ☉ The Dukes Mistris. As it was presented by her Majesties Servants, At the private House in Drury-Lane. Written by Iames Shirly. 1638.
- Emilia. London: Printed for the Author. (Anon.) 1672. (In the Epilog the play is called a "Tragi-Comedy.")
- ☉ The Emperour of the East. A Tragæ-Comædie. The Scæne Constantinople. As it hath bene diuers times acted, at the Black-friers, and Globe Play-houses, by the Kings Maiesties Seruants. Written by Philip Massinger. 1632.
- The English Stage Italianiz'd. In a new Dramatic entertainment, called Dido and Æneas: or, Harlequin, a Butler, a Pimp, a Minister of State, Generalissimo, and Lord High Admiral: dead and alive again, and at last crown'd King of Carthage, by Dido. A Tragi-Comedy, after the Italian manner; by way of Essay, or first step towards the farther Improvement of the English Stage. Written by Thomas D'Urfey, Poet Laureat de Jure. 1727.
- ☉ The English Traveller. As it hath beene Publikely acted at the Cock-Pit in Drury-lane: By Her Maiesties seruants.

Written by Thomas Heywood. 1633. (In author's preface called a "Tragi-comedy.")

Erminia. Or, The fair and vertuous Lady. A Trage-comedy. Written by Rich. Flecknoe. Printed for the Author, MDCLXI. (Ed. of 1665, "Erminia, or the Chaste Lady; A Trage-Comœdy.")

The Fair Favorite. Sr. William Davenant Kt. 1673.

○ The Fair Maid of the Inn. (John Fletcher and Philip Mas-singer.) 1647. (Folio of 1679, "A Tragi-Comedy.")

○ The Fair Maid Of The West. Or, A Girle worth gold. The first part. As it was lately acted before the King and Queen, with approved liking, By the Queens Majesties Comedians. Written by T. H. (Thomas Heywood). 1631. (Second part separate title page with same imprint.)

The fair Spanish Captive: a Trage-Comedy. (Advertised at end of *The New World of English Words*, 1658, as "in the Presse, and ready for Printing." Also at the end of *Wit and Drollery, Joviall Poems*, 1661.)

○ A Faire Quarrell. As it was Acted before the King and diuers times publicly by the Prince his Highnes Seruants. Written By Thomas Middleton and William Rowley Gentl. 1617.

The Faithful Shepherd. A Pastoral Tragi-comedy, Written in Italian, by the Celebrated Signor Baptista Guarini. Translated into English, and Adorn'd with a new Set of Cuts. (Anon.) 1736.

○ The Faithfull Shepheardesse. By Iohn Fletcher. Printed at London for R. Bonian and H. Walley, and are to be sold at the spread Eagle ouer against the great North dore of S. Paules. (n. d., c. 1609/10. In author's preface, "a pastoral tragi-comedy.")

The False Favourit Disgrac'd, and the Reward of Loyalty. A Tragi-Comedy, Never Acted. (George Gerbier D'Ouvilly.) 1657.

The Female Rebellion A Tragicomedy. (n. d. Anon. From a MS. in the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow. Printed for the first time, 1872.)

The Floating Island: A Tragi-Comedy, Acted before his Majesty at Oxford, Aug. 29. 1636. By the Students of Christ-Church. Written by William Strode, late Orator of the University of Oxford, The Aires and Songs set by Mr. Henry Lawes, servant to his late Majesty in his publick and private Musick. 1655.

The Fool would be a Favourit: or, the Discreet Lover. A Trage-Comedy. By Lodowick Carlell, Gent. 1657.

The Forc'd Marriage, or the Jealous Bridegroom. A Tragi-comedy, As it is Acted at His Highnesse the Duke of York's Theatre. Written by A. Behn. 1671.

○ Fortune by Land and Sea. A Tragi-Comedy. As it was Acted with great Applause by the Queens Servants. Written by Tho Haywood and William Rowly. 1655.

The Galilean's Victory A Tragi-Comedy of Religious Life in England In Four Acts. By Henry Arthur Jones. 1907. (Later called The Evangelist.)

The Generall: A Tragi-Comedy. Attributed to James Shirley. (Printed by Halliwell, 1853, *A Brief Description of the Ancient & Modern Manuscripts . . . Plymouth Library.*)

○ The Gentleman of Venice A Tragi-Comedie. Presented at the Private house in Salisbury Court by her Majesties Servants. Written by James Shirley. 1655.

○ The Gentleman Usher. By George Chapman. 1606.
The German Princess. See A Witty Combat.

○ The Glasse of Gouvernement. A tragicall Comedie so entituled, bycause therein are handled aswell the rewardes for Vertues, as also the punishment for Vices. Done by George Gascoigne Esquier. 1575.

The Governor. A tragi-comedy. By Sir Cornelius Formido. 1656. (MS. in British Museum. See Halliwell.)

○ The Great Duke of Florence. A Comickall Historie. As it hath beene often presented with good allowance by her Maties Servants at the Phoenix in Drurie-Lane. Written by Philip Massinger. 1636.

○ The Great Favourite, Or, the Duke of Lerma. As it was Acted at the Theatre-Royal By His Majesties Servants. Written by the Honourable Sir Robert Howard. 1668.

The Heire an excellent Comedie. As it was lately Acted by the Company of the Reuels. Written by T. M. (Thomas May.) Gent. 1622.

The History of Henry the Fifth. As it was Acted at His Highness the Duke of York's Theatre. Written by The Right Honourable the Earl of Orrery. 1667.

- The Honest Man's Fortune. (John Fletcher, Philip Massinger, and others.) 1647. (Folio of 1679, "A Tragi-Comedy.")

Hoops into Spinning-Wheels. A tragi-comedy. Written by a gentleman in Gloucestershire (John Blanch.) Gloucester, 1725.

- The Humorous Lieutenant. (John Fletcher.) 1647. (Folio of 1679, "A Tragi-Comedy.")

- Hymens Triumph. A Pastorall Tragicomædie. Presented at the Queenes Court in the Strand at her Maiesties magnificent intertainement of the Kings most excellent Maiesitie, being the Nuptials of the Lord Roxborough. By Samuel Daniel. 1615.

- The Imposture a Tragi-Comedie, As it was Acted at the private House in Black Fryers. Written by James Shirley. 1652.

The Inconstant Ladie. Acted at Blackfriers. The Scæne Burgundie. (A. Wilson. n.d. Printed from MS. in Bodleian by P. Bliss, Oxford, 1814.)

The Injured Princess, or the Fatal Wager: As it was Acted at the Theater-Royal, By his Majesties Servants. By Tho. Durfey, Gent. 1682. (From Shakspeare's Cymbeline.)

Ireland Preserv'd: or the Siege of London-Derry. Together with the Troubles of the North. Written by the then Governour (John Michelburne). Part I. 1705. (Part II adds, "A Tragi-comedy.")

The Island Princess. (John Fletcher.) 1647. (Folio of 1679, "A Tragi-Comedy.")

The Island-Princess: As it is Acted at the Theatre Royal, Reviv'd with Alterations. By N. Tate. Gent. 1687.

- The Scottish Historie of Iames the fourth, slaine at Flodden. Entermixed with a pleasant Comedie, presented by Obo-

ram King of Fayeries: As it hath bene sundrie times publicly plaide. Written by Robert Greene, Maister of Arts. 1598.

The Tragi-Comedy of Joan of Hedington. Scene Hedington. In Imitation of Shakespear. (William King.) 1712.

Juliana or the Princess of Poland. A Tragicomedy. As it is Acted at His Royal Highness the Duke of York's Theatre. By J. Crown, Gent. 1671.

The Just General: A Tragi:Comedy, Written by Major Cosmo: Manuche. 1652.

The Iust Italian. Lately presented in the priuate house at Blacke Friers, By his Maiesties Seruants. (William Davenant.) 1630. (Folio of 1673, "a Tragi-Comedy.")

The Key of the Garden. A Tragi-Comedy. By Serj. Young. Dundee, 1801.

A King and no King. Acted at the Globe, by his Maiesties Seruants: Written by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher. 1619.

King Edgar and Alfreda. A Tragi-Comedy. Acted at the Theatre-Royal, Written by Edward Ravenscroft, Gent. 1677.

K. Henry IV. with the Humours of Sir John Falstaff. A Tragi-Comedy. As it is Acted at the Theatre in Little-Lincolns-Inn-Fields By His Majesty's Servants. Revived, with Alterations (by Tho. Betterton). Written Originally by Mr. Shakespear. 1700.

K. Henry IV. with the Humours of Sir John Falstaff. A Tragi-Comedy, By Mr. W. Shakespear. 1721.

The Knight of Malta. (John Fletcher and Philip Massinger.) 1647.

The Ladies Priviledge. As it was Acted with good allowance at the Cock-pit in Drury-lane, And before their Majesties at White-Hall twice. By their Maiesties Servants. The Author Henry Glapthorne. 1640.

6 The Ladies Triall. Acted By both their Majesties Servants at the private house in Drury Lane. (John Ford.) 1639.

The Lady-Errant: A Tragi-Comedy. Written by Mr William Cartwright, Late Student of Christ-Church in Oxford, and Proctor of the University. 1651.

- Landgartha. A Tragic-Comedy, as it was presented in the new Theater in Dublin, with good applause, being an Ancient story, Written by H. B. (Henry Burnell). Printed at Dublin Anno, 1641.
- The Late Revolution: or, the Happy Change. A Tragic-Comedy, As it was Acted throughout the English Dominions In the Year 1688. Written by a Person of Quality. 1690.
- The Law against Lovers. Sr. William Davenant Kt. 1673.
- The Laws of Candy. (John Fletcher and Philip Massinger.) 1647. (Folio of 1679, "A Tragi-Comedy.")
- The History of Lewis the eleventh King of France: a Tragic-Comedy.* (Advertised at end of *The New World of English Words*, 1658, as "in the Presse, and ready for Printing." Also at the end of *Wit and Drollery, Joviall Poems*, 1661.)
- ☞ A Looking Glasse for London and England. Made by Thomas Lodge Gentleman, and Robert Greene. In *Artibus Magister*. 1594. (MS. title page to 1598 quarto, "Tr. Com.")
- The Lost Lady. A Tragy Comedy. (Sir Wm. Berkley.) 1638.
- Love and Honour, Written by W. Davenant Knight. Presented by His Majesties Servants at the Black-Fryers. 1649.
- Love Crownes the End. A Pastorall Presented by the scholles of Bingham in the County of Nottingham; in the yeare 1632. Written by Io. Tatham Gent. 1640. (Ed. of 1657, "a Tragi-Comedy.")
- ☞ The Lovers Melancholy. Acted at the priuate House in the Blacke-Friers, and publikely at the Globe by the Kings Maiesties seruants. (John Ford.) 1629.
- The Lovers Progress. (John Fletcher and Philip Massinger.) 1647.
- Love's Kingdom. A Pastoral Trage-Comedy. Not as it was Acted at the Theatre near Lincolns-Inn, but as it was written, and since corrected by Richard Flecknoe. With a short Treatise of the English Stage, &c. by the same Author. 1664.

- Love's Labyrinth; or, The Royal Shepherdess: A Tragi-Comedie. By Tho. Forde, *Philothal*. 1660.
- Loves Victory: A Tragi-comedy. By William Chamberlaine of Shaftsbury in the County of Dorset. 1658. (Never acted. Redacted in 1678 as Wits led by the Nose.)
- The Love-sick Court. or the Ambitious Politique. A Comedy Written by Richard Brome: 1658.
- Love Triumphant; or, Nature will Prevail. A Tragi-Comedy. As it is Acted at the Theatre Royal, By Their Majesties Servants. Written by Mr. Dryden. 1694.
- The Loyal Lovers: A Tragi-Comedy. Written by Major Cosmo Manuche. 1652.
- The Loyal Subject. (John Fletcher.) 1647. (Folio of 1679, "A Tragi-Comedy.")
- The Mad Lover. (John Fletcher.) 1647. (Folio of 1679, "A Tragi-Comedy.")
- Mahomet and his heaven, or Epimethea, graund Emprise of the deserts of Arabia, or a dreame of a drye summer. or the weather-woman; a tragœcomœdye. (MS. in Cambridge Library. See Arabia Sitiens.)
- The Maid of Honour. As it hath beene often presented with good allowance at the Phoenix in Drurie-Lane, by the Queenes Majesties Servants. Written by Philip Massinger. 1632.
- The Malcontent. By Iohn Marston. 1604. (S. R. July 5, 1604, "Tragicomedia.")
- Marcellia: or the Treacherous Friend. A Tragicomedy. As it is Acted at the Theatre-Royal, by His Majesties Servants. Written by Mrs. F. Boothby. 1670.
- Marciano: or The Discovery. A Tragi-Comedy, Acted with great applause, before His Majesties high Commissioner, and others of the Nobility, at the Abby of Holyrudhouse, on St. Johns night: By a company of Gentlemen (Author, William Clark?) Edinburgh. Printed in the year, 1663.
- Marriage A-la-mode A Comedy John Dryden. 1673.
- The Marshal of Luxembourg, upon his Death-Bed. A tragi-comedy. Done out of French. (Anon.) Collen. 1695.

○ A Tragi-Comedy: Called, Match mee in London. As it hath beene often Presented; First, at the Bull in St. Iohns-street; And lately, at the Priuate-House in Drury-Lane, called the Phoenix. Written by Tho: Dekker. 1631.

The Second Part of the Play Called the Matrimonial Trouble. A Come-Tragedy. By Lady Marchioness of Newcastle. 1662. (The first Part is entitled "A Comedy.")

Measvre for Measure. (Among Comedies.) William Shakespeare. 1623.

The excellent History of the Merchant of Venice. With the extreme cruelty of Shylocke the Jew towards the saide Merchant, in cutting a iust pound of his flesh. And the obtaining of Portia, by the choyse of three Caskets. Written by W. Shakespeare. 1600.

Mercurius Britannicus, or The English Intelligencer. A Tragic-Comedy, at Paris. Acted with great Applause. (By R. Braithwait.) 1641.

Mercurius Britannicus.	Judicialis Cen-	{	Febris Judicialis.
sura;	vel,		
	Curialis Cura.		Sententia navalis.

Tragi-Comœdia Lutetiæ, Summo cum applausu publicè acta. (A Latin version of the above. n.d. 1641?)

The Mistakes, or, The False Report: A Tragi-Comedy. Acted by their Majesties Servants. Written by Mr. Jos. Harris. The Prologue Written by Mr. Dryden, The Epilogue by Mr. Tate. 1691.

○ A Most pleasant Comedie of Mucedorus. the kings sonne of Valentia and Amadine the kings daughter of Arragon, with the merie conceites of Mouse. Newly set foorth, as it hath bin sundrie times plaide in the honorable Cittie of London. Very delectable and full of mirth. (Anon.) 1598.

A Tragi-Comedy, called New-Market-Fayre, or a Parliament Out-Cry: of State-Commodities, set to sale. Printed at you may goe look. 1649.

The Second Part of the Tragi-Comedy, Called New-Market-Fayre, Or Mrs. Parliaments New Figaryes. Written by

- the Man in the Moon. Printed at you may goe look.
1649.
- Nicomede. A Tragi-Comedy, Translated out of the French
Of Monsieur Corneille, By John Dancer. As it was
Acted at the Theatre-Royal In Dublin. Together with an
Exact Catalogue of all the English Stage-Plays printed,
till this present Year 1671.
- The Noble Choice; or, the Orator.* By Philip Massinger.
(S.R. Sept. 9, 1653.)
- The Noble Ingratitude. A Pastoral-Tragi-Comedy. By Sr.
William Lower Knight. Hage, 1659. (Translated from
the French of Philippe Quinault.)
- A Tragedy called, The Noble man written by Cyrill
Tournour.*—S.R. Feb. 15, 1612.
- The Noble Tryal. A tragi-comedy.* By Henry Glapthorne.
(S.R. Nov. 29, 1660.)
- Nothing Impossible to Love. A tragi-comedy.* By Sir Robert
Le Greece. (S.R. June 29, 1660.)
- (Ormasdes; or) Love and Friendship, a Tragi-Comedy.
Written by Sr William Killigrew, Vice-Chamberlane to
Her Majesty. Oxford, 1666.
- The Partiall Law A Tragi-Comedy By an unknown author
(c. 1615–30). Now first printed from the original manu-
script Edited by Bertram Dobell. 1908.
- The Passionate Lovers, A Tragi-Comedy. The First and
Second Parts. Twice presented before the King and
Queens Majesties at Somerset-House, and very often at
the Private House in Black-Friars, with great Applause.
By his late Majesties Servants. Written by Lodowick
Carlell, Gent. 1655.
- The Phoenix, As it hath beene sundry times Acted by the
Children of Paules. And presented before his Maiestie.
1607.
- Philaster. A Tragedy. Written by Beaumont and Fletcher.
With Alterations (by George Colman). First acted at
the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, on the 8th of October,
1763.
- Philaster; or, Love lies a bleeding. A Tragi-comedy. As it is

now acted at His Majesty's Theatre Royal. Revis'd, and the Two last Acts new Written (by Elkanah Settle.) 1695.

Philæzo and Hippolita. By Philip Massinger. (S.R. Sept. 9, 1653.)

Phylaster. Or Loue lyes a Bleeding. Acted at the Globe by his Maiesties Seruants. Written by Francis Baymont and Iohn Fletcher. Gent. 1620.

○ The Picture. A Tragedy, As it was often presented with good allowance, at the Globe, and Blacke-Friers Play-houses, by the Kings Maiesties seruants. Written by Philip Massinger. 1630.

Piety and Valour; or Derry Defended. See Siege of Derry.

○ The Platonick Lovers. A Tragedy. Presented at the private House in the Black-Fryers, By his Majesties Servants. The Authour William D'avenant, Servant to her Majestie. 1636.

The Poor-Mans Comfort. A Tragi-Comedy, As it was diuers times Acted at the Cock-pit in Drury lane with great applause. Written by Robert Dauborne Master of Arts. 1655.

The Presbyterian Lash: or, Noctroffs Maid whipt. A Tragedy As it was lately Acted in the great roome at the Pye Tavern at Algate. By Noctroffe the Priest, and severall his parishioners at the eating of a chine of beefe. The first part. Printed for the use of Mr. Noctroffs friends. (Francis Kirkman?) 1661.

The Princess of Cleve, As it was Acted At the Queen's Theatre in Dorset-Garden. By Nat. Lee, Gent. 1689. (Entered in Term Catalogues as a "Tragi-Comedy," June, 1697.)

The Princesse: or, Love at first Sight. A Tragi-Comedy: The Scene Naples and Sicily. Written in Naples by Thomas Killigrew. 1663.

The Prisoner; or, The Fair Anchoreess of Pausilippo. By Philip Massinger. (S.R. Sept. 9, 1653.)

The Prisoners (with Claracilla). Two Tragæ-Comedies. As they were presented at the Phoenix in Drury-Lane, by

her M^{ties} Servants. Written by Tho. Killigrew, Gent. 1641.

- 6 The Right Excellent and famous Historye, of Promos and Cassandra; Deuided into two Commicall Discourses. In the fyrste parte is showne, the vnsufferable abuse, of a lewde Magistrate: The vertuous behauiours of a chaste Ladye: The vncontrowled leawdenes of a fauoured Cur-tisan. And the vnderued estimation of a pernicious Parasyte. In the second parte is discoursed, the perfect magnanimitye of a noble kinge, in checking vice and fauouringe Vertue: Wherein is showne, the Ruyne and ouerthrowe, of dishonest practises: with the aduancement of vpright dealing. The worke of George Whetstones Gent. 1578.

The Prophetess, A Tragical History. (John Fletcher and Philip Massinger.) 1647.

Pseudomagia A Latin tragi-comedy, by William Mewe, a fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, 1618-26. (MS. Emmanuel Coll., Camb. 1.3.16; also MS. of Trinity Coll. Camb.)

The Queen and Concubine. A Comedie By Richard Brome. 1659.

The Queen of Corinth. (John Fletcher and Philip Massinger.) 1647. (Folio of 1679, "A Tragi-Comedy.")

The Queen, or the Excellency of her Sex. An Excellent old Play. Found out by a Person of Honour, and given to the Publisher, Alexander Goughe. (Anon.) 1653.

The Queene of Arragon. A Tragi-Comedie. (William Habington.) 1640.

- 7 The Queenes Arcadia. A Pastorall Trage-comedie presented to her Maiestie and her Ladies, by the Vniuersitie of Oxford in Christs Church. In August last. (Samuel Daniel.) 1605.

The Queenes Exchange. A Comedy. Acted with generall applause at the Black-Friers By His Majesties Servants. Written by Mr. Richard Brome. 1657.

Tragi-Comœdia, Cui in Titulum inscribitur Regicidium, perspicacissimis iudiciis accuratius perspecta, pensata, com-

probata; Authore Ric: Brathwait, Armigero, utriusque
Academiæ Alumno. 1665.

The Reign of Hellebore, King of Rien de Tout. A Tragi-
Comedy. (Anon.) Printed at York. 1760.

The Religious. Lady Marchioness of Newcastle. 1662.

The Renegado, A Tragæcomédie. As it hath beene often
acted by the Queenes Maiesties seruants, at the priuate
Play-house in Drurye-Lane. By Philip Massinger. 1630.

Reparatus, sive, Depositum. Tragico-Comœdia, prima pars.
Seu Reparatus desperabundus. By William Drury. 1628.

o The Restauration: or, Right will take Place. A Tragicomedy.
Written by George Villiers, late Duke of Buckingham.
From the Original Copy, never before Printed. 1714.
(An alteration of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Philaster*.)

The Rival-Ladies. A Tragi-Comedy, As it was Acted at the
Theatre Royal. *Nos hæc norimus esse nihil*. (John
Dryden.) 1664.

The Rivals. A Comedy. Acted by His Highnes the Duke of
York's Servants. (William Davenant.) 1668.

Romco and Juliet. An unprinted alteration by James Howard,
c. 1662. See Downes' *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708), p. 22.

The Royal Cuckold: or, Great Bastard. Giving an account of
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